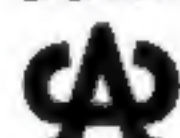


MARVEL  
COMICS

1

APPROVED  
BY THE  
COMICS  
CODE



AUTHORITY



20  
99

BON 93  
BIM  
ADAM  
LUBER

IN THE NEVADA DESERT, THE NUEVO SOL ARCOLOGY RISES FROM SAND AND SCRUB, A GHOSTLY REMINDER OF BROKEN DREAMS OF THE PAST.

DESIGNED IN THE EARLY 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY TO BE A SELF-SUFFICIENT, NON-POLLUTING WORKING AND LIVING ENVIRONMENT--

--NUEVO SOL'S CONSTRUCTION WAS STOPPED BY THE ECONOMICS AND POLITICS OF THAT TIME, LEAVING IT ABANDONED, UNFINISHED.

IN THE HARSH REALITY OF THE PRESENT, NUEVO SOL ONCE AGAIN OFFERS THE PROMISE OF REDEMPTION--

--TO THE CHOSEN FEW WILLING TO ACCEPT THE INVITATION, AND BRAVE THE CHALLENGE.

WHAT AM I DOING? TWO HOURS TO HIKE HERE FROM I-15 ON A NINETY-FOUR DEGREE NIGHT--

--AND I CAN'T DECIDE WHETHER TO GO IN.

WITH MY LUCK, THERE'S NO ONE INSIDE, AND THIS IS SIMPLY ANOTHER INSTALLMENT IN THE COSMIC JOKE THAT IS MY LIFE.

THEN AGAIN, WHAT HAVE I GOT TO LOSE?

UH OH.



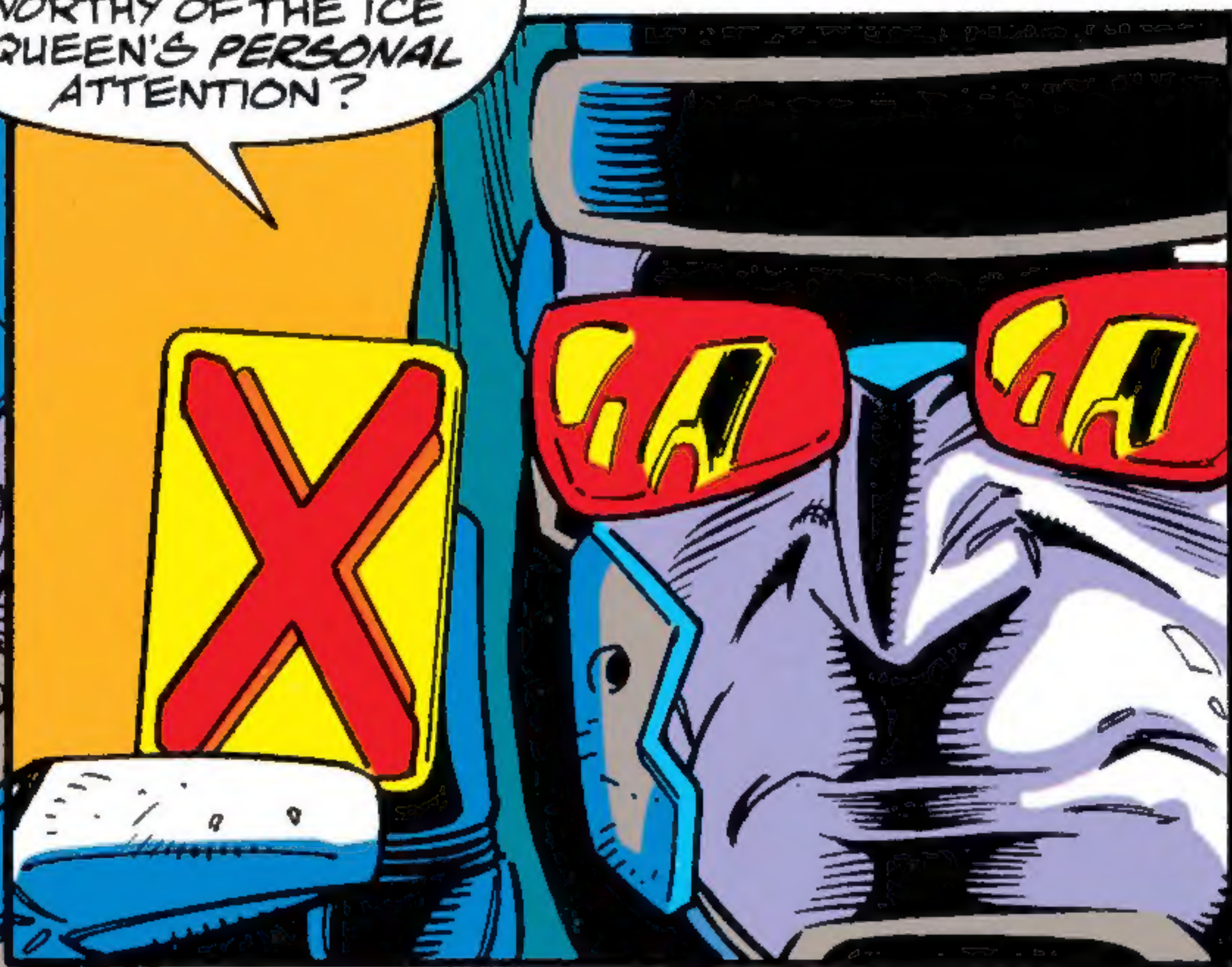
GOT A REASON TO BE HERE, MEAT?



WHAT'S THE MATTER, YOU MUTE OR SOMETHIN'? I ASKED YOU A QUESTION.

THIS INDIAN WOMAN-- IN KINGMAN-- GAVE ME THIS CARD-- SAID IT WOULD GET ME IN.

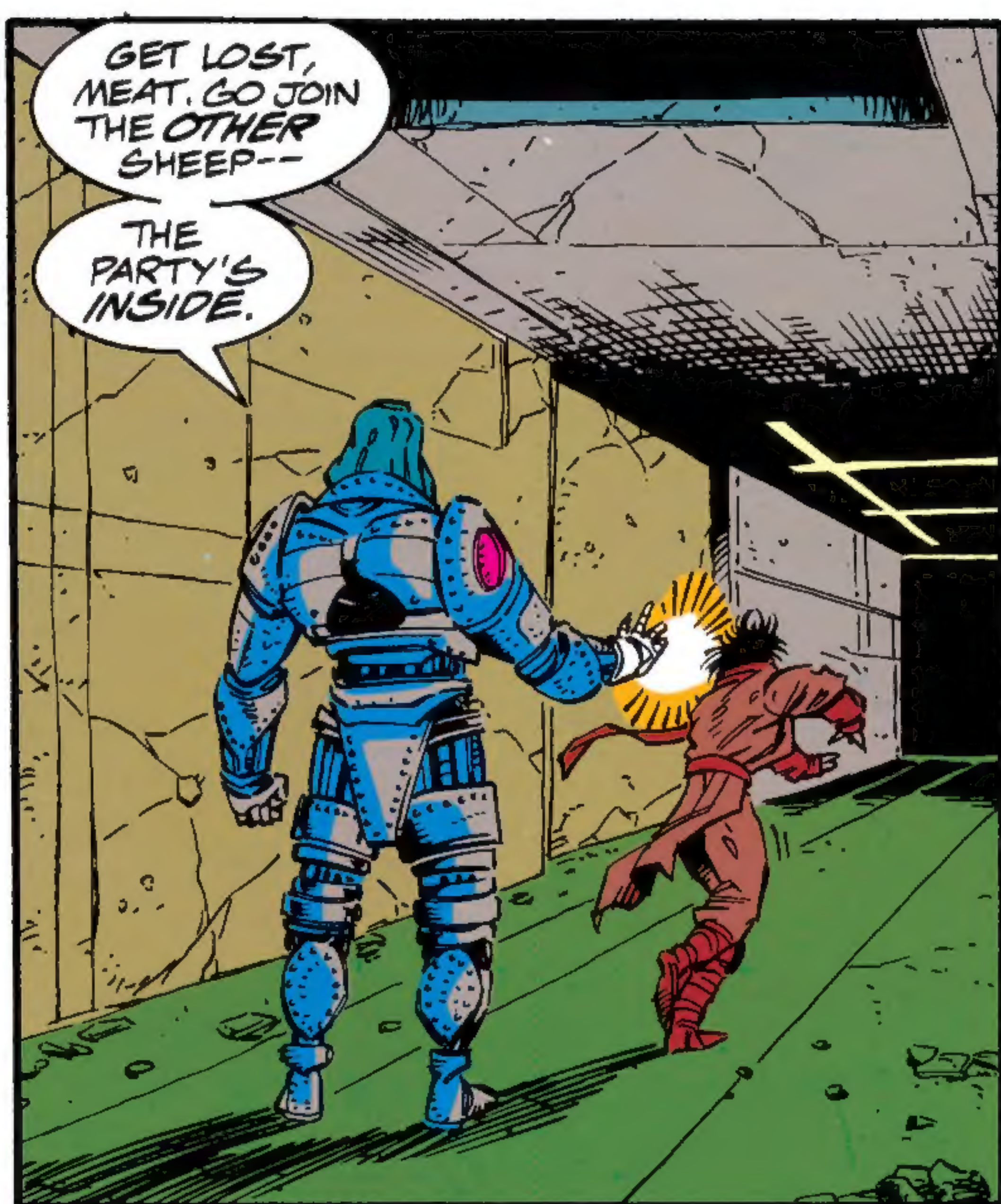
SO SHAKTI FOUND YOU? WONDER WHAT MAKES YOU WORTHY OF THE ICE QUEEN'S PERSONAL ATTENTION?



ARE YOU A FIGHTER, MEAT?

WANT TO TEST YOUR METTLE AGAINST MY METAL-- LEARN HOW IT FEELS TO BE SCRAPPED BY JUNKPILE?

LOOK, I DON'T WANT ANY TROUBLE. I'VE GOT ENOUGH AS IT IS.



GET LOST, MEAT. GO JOIN THE OTHER SHEEP--

THE PARTY'S INSIDE.

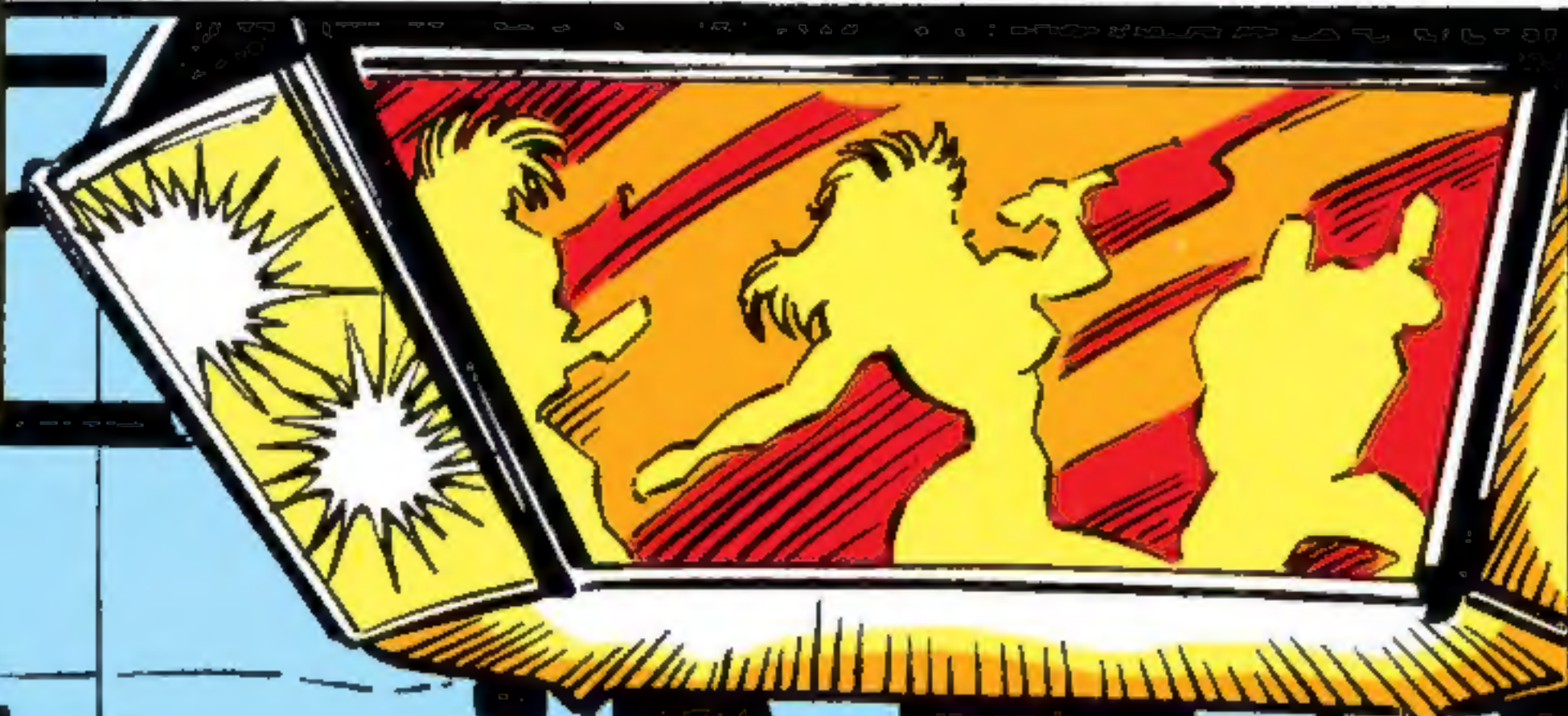


PARTY?  
RIGHT.



LIKE I HAVE  
ANYTHING  
TO  
CELEBRATE.

FOR THE LAST EIGHT  
MONTHS, TIMOTHY  
SEAN FITZGERALD  
HAS WANDERED THE  
SOUTHWEST, LOST  
AND ALONE --



--BURDENED BY GUILT AND SHAME,  
DRIVEN BY A RESTLESSNESS HE  
CANNOT EXPLAIN.



NOW, SUDDENLY  
OVERWHELMED BY  
A CONCUSSION  
BLAST OF LIGHT,  
SOUND AND  
MOVEMENT--

--HE WONDERS  
IF HIS SOLITARY  
EXISTENCE HAS  
FINALLY PUSHED  
HIM OVER THE  
EDGE--

--AND DRIVEN  
HIM INSANE.

# THE GATHERING

JOHN FRANCIS  
MOORE  
WRITER

RON  
LIM  
PENCILER

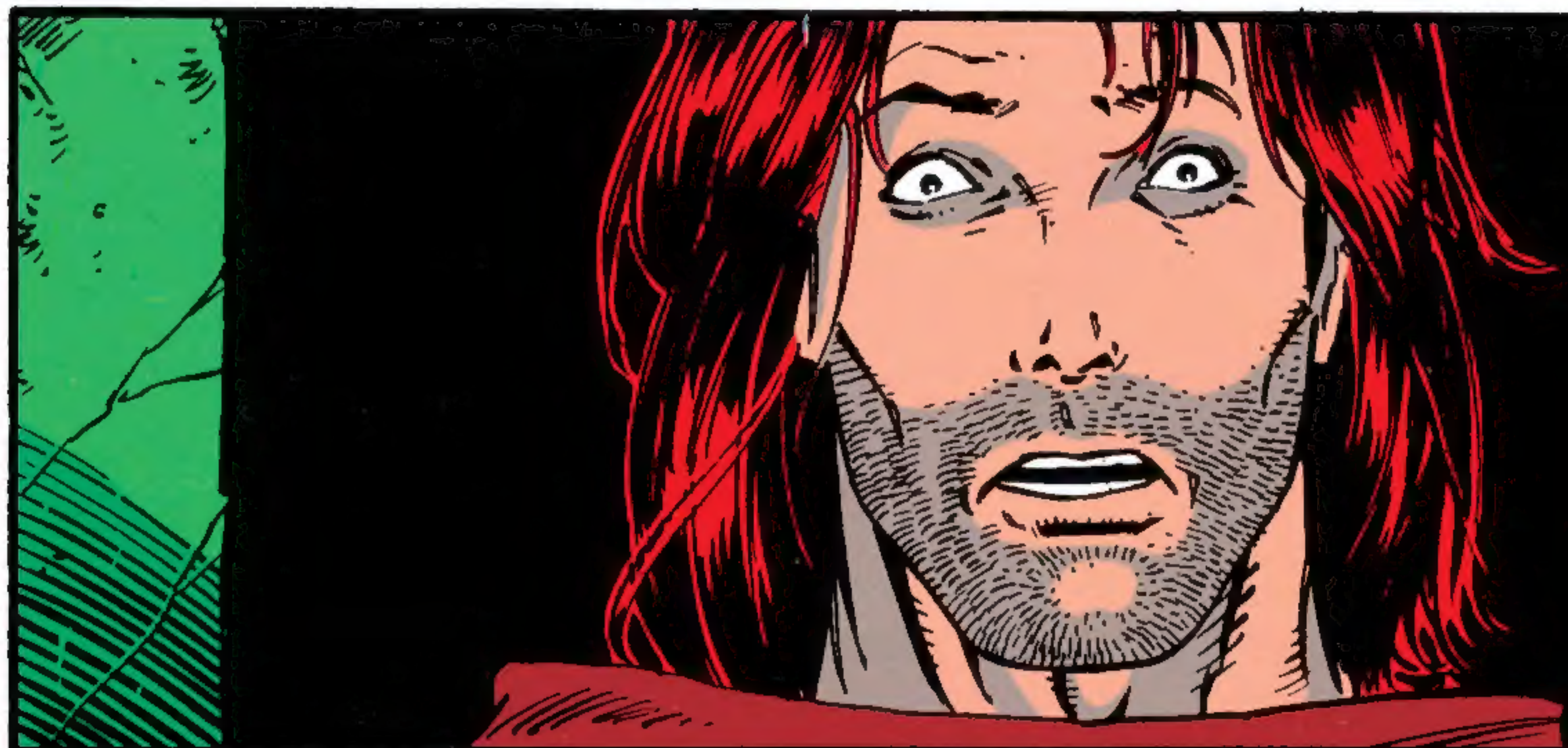
ADAM  
KUBERT  
INKER

KEN  
LOPEZ  
LETTERER

TOM  
SMITH  
COLORIST

JOEY  
CAVALIERI  
EDITOR

TOM  
DEFALCO  
CHIEF



DON'T  
UNDERSTAND.  
NUEVO SOL'S  
SUPPOSED TO BE  
DESERTED--



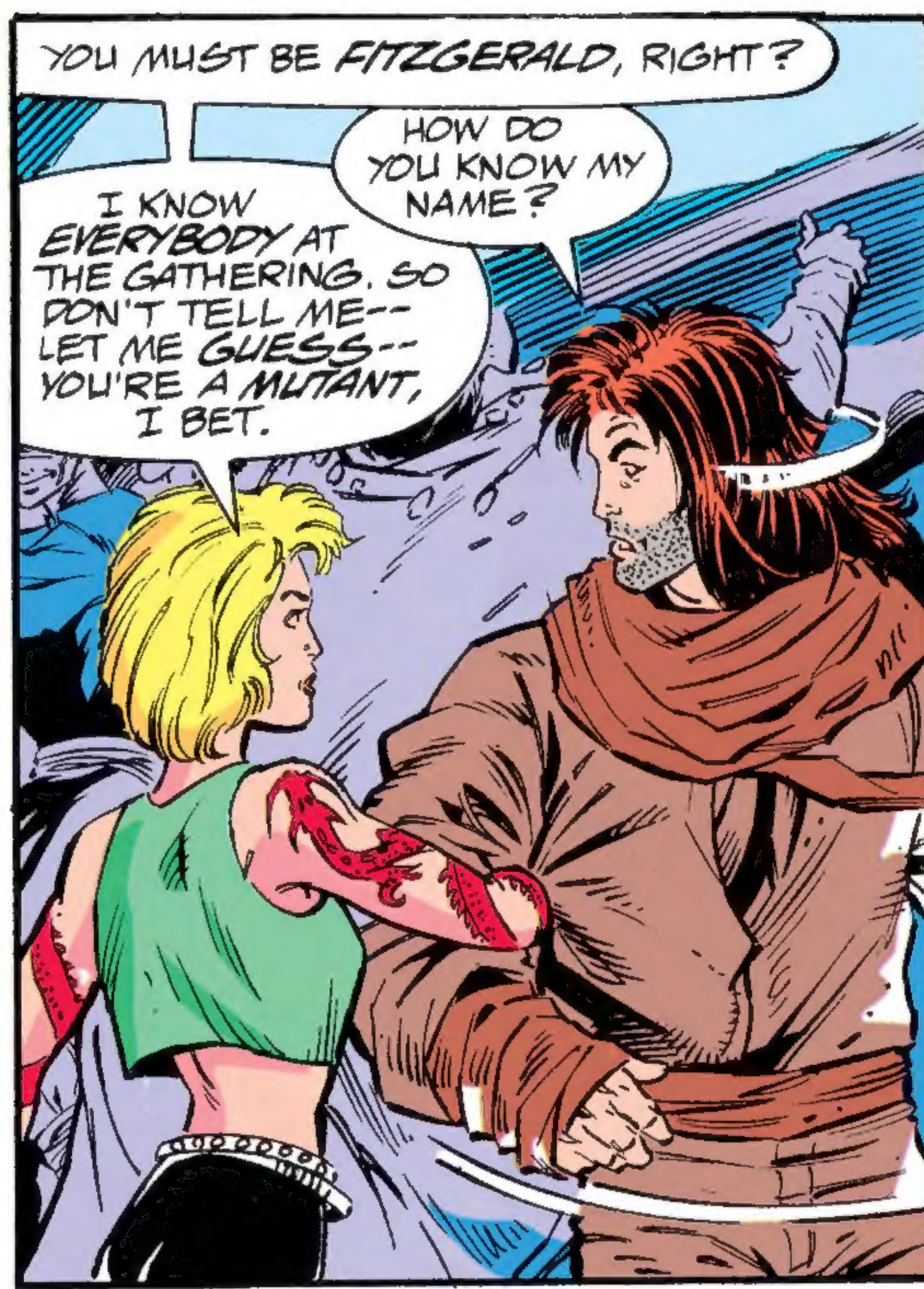
...ALL THESE PEOPLE... NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE...

HEY!



CAREFUL, BROTHER-- YOU LOOK LIKE YOU'VE BEEN OUT IN THE SUN TOO--

HEY, YOU'RE NEW HERE, AREN'T YOU?



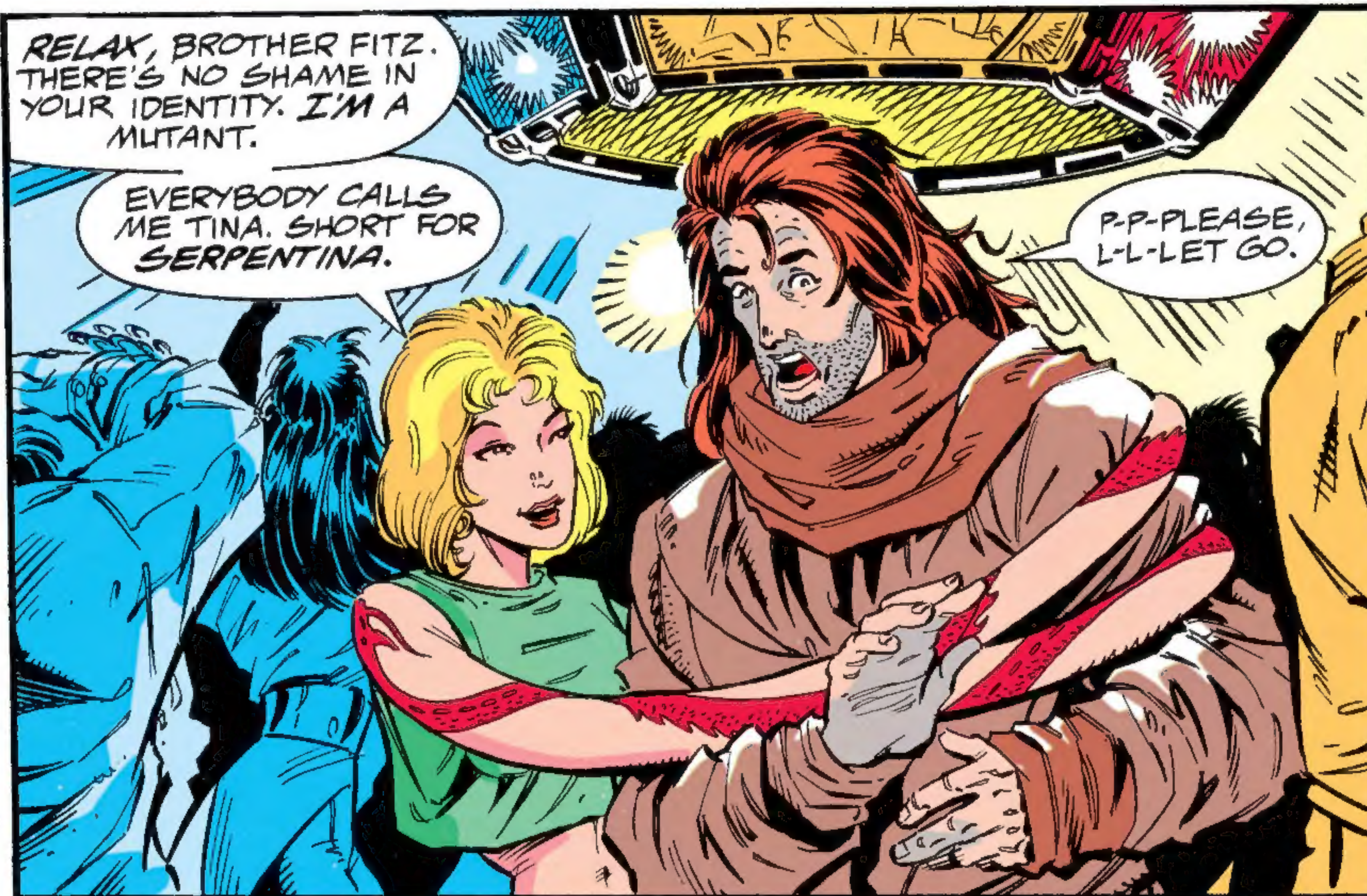
YOU MUST BE FITZGERALD, RIGHT?

HOW DO YOU KNOW MY NAME?

I KNOW EVERYBODY AT THE GATHERING. SO DON'T TELL ME-- LET ME GUESS-- YOU'RE A MUTANT, I BET.



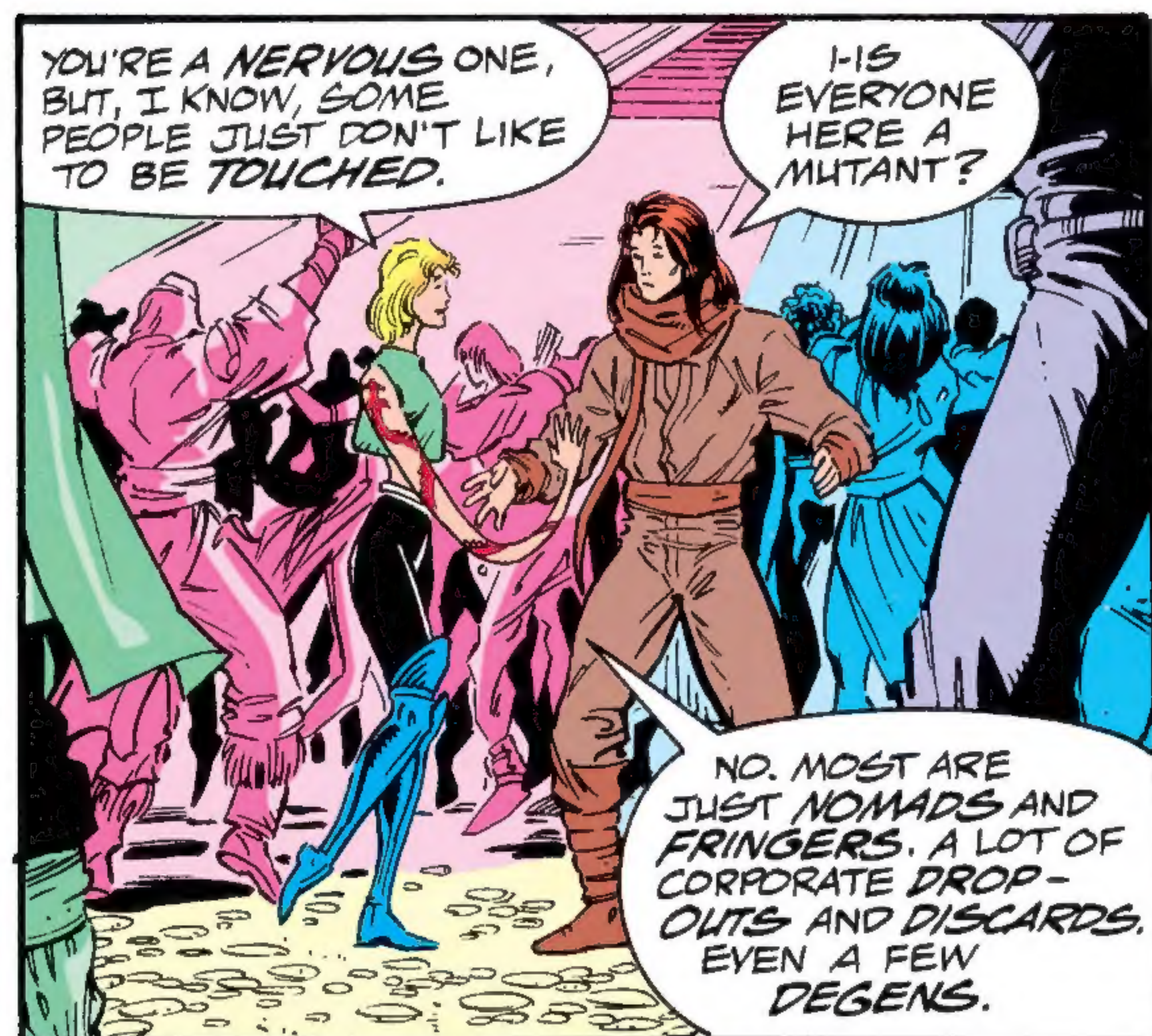
MUTANT? NO. NO. I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT.



RELAX, BROTHER FITZ. THERE'S NO SHAME IN YOUR IDENTITY. I'M A MUTANT.

EVERYBODY CALLS ME TINA. SHORT FOR SERPENTINA.

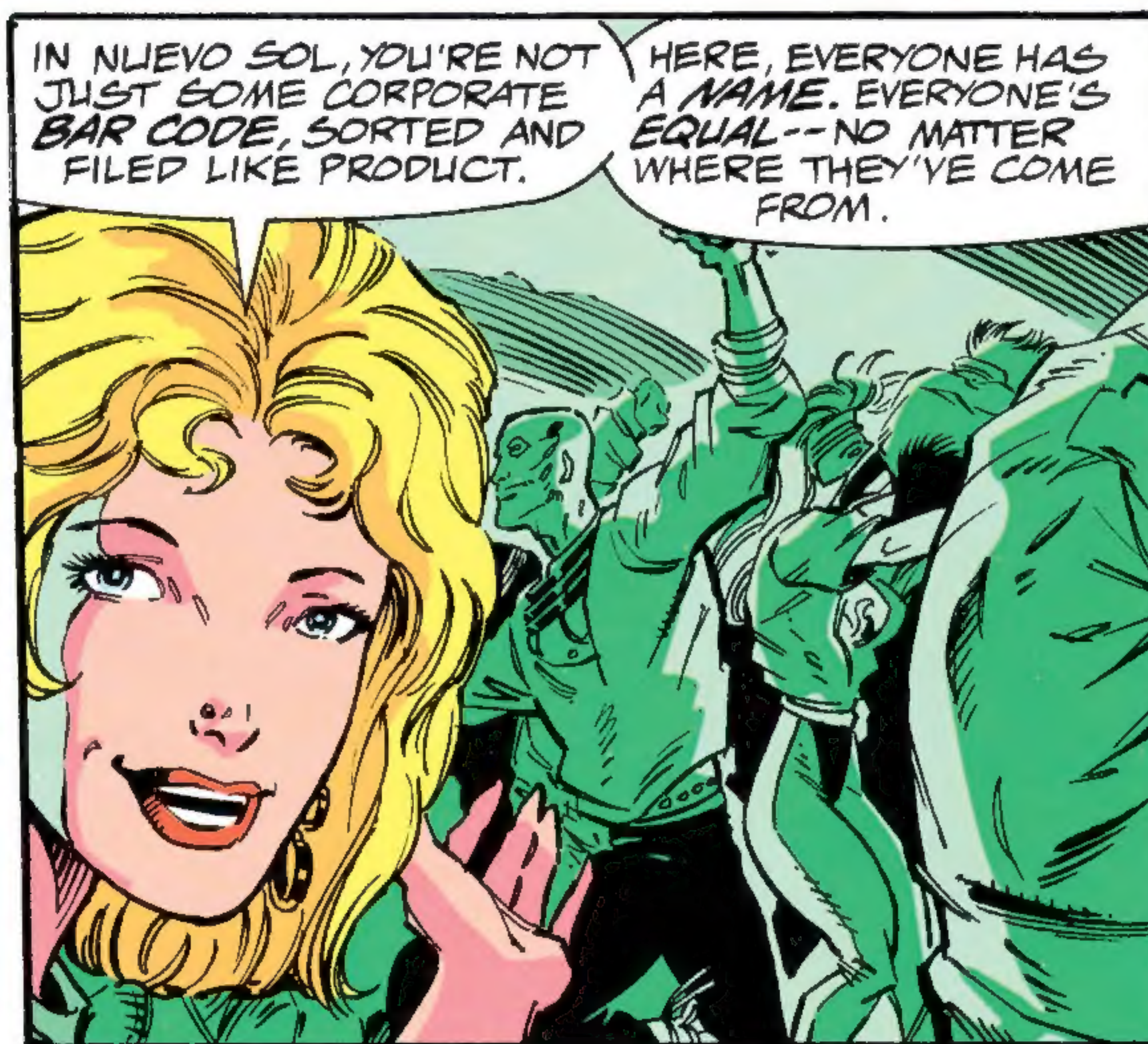
P-P-PLEASE, L-L-LET GO.



YOU'RE A NERVOUS ONE, BUT, I KNOW, SOME PEOPLE JUST DON'T LIKE TO BE TOUCHED.

IS EVERYONE HERE A MUTANT?

NO. MOST ARE JUST NOMADS AND FRINGERS. A LOT OF CORPORATE DROP-OUTS AND DISCARDS. EVEN A FEW DEGENS.

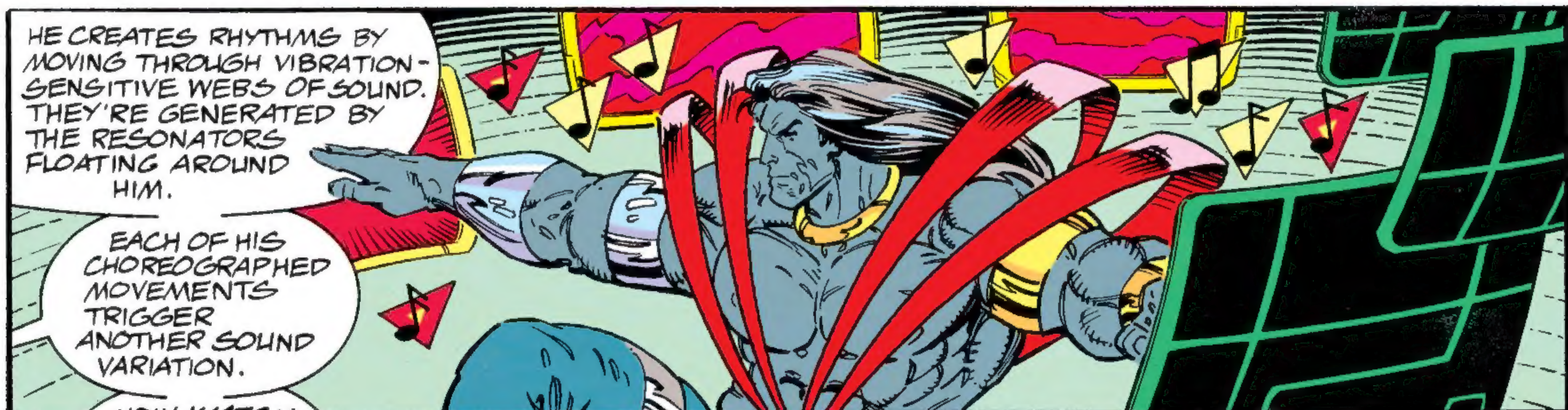


IN NUEVO SOL, YOU'RE NOT JUST SOME CORPORATE BAR CODE, SORTED AND FILED LIKE PRODUCT.

HERE, EVERYONE HAS A NAME. EVERYONE'S EQUAL-- NO MATTER WHERE THEY'VE COME FROM.



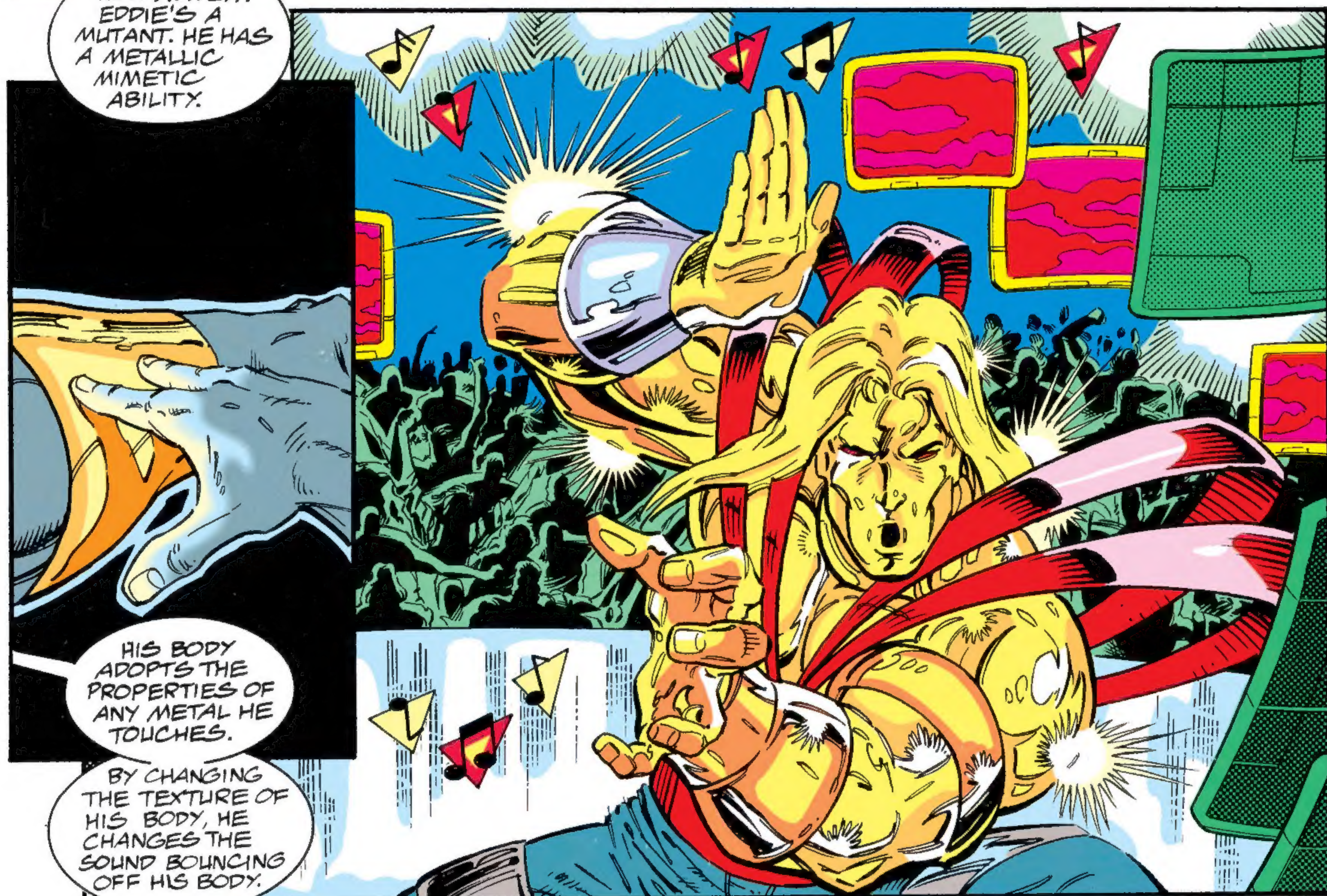
SEE THE SYNTHO-PERCUSSIONIST? THAT'S EDDIE. USED TO PLAY WITH THE ARMAGEDDON CHOIR.



HE CREATES RHYTHMS BY MOVING THROUGH VIBRATION-SENSITIVE WEBS OF SOUND. THEY'RE GENERATED BY THE RESONATORS FLOATING AROUND HIM.

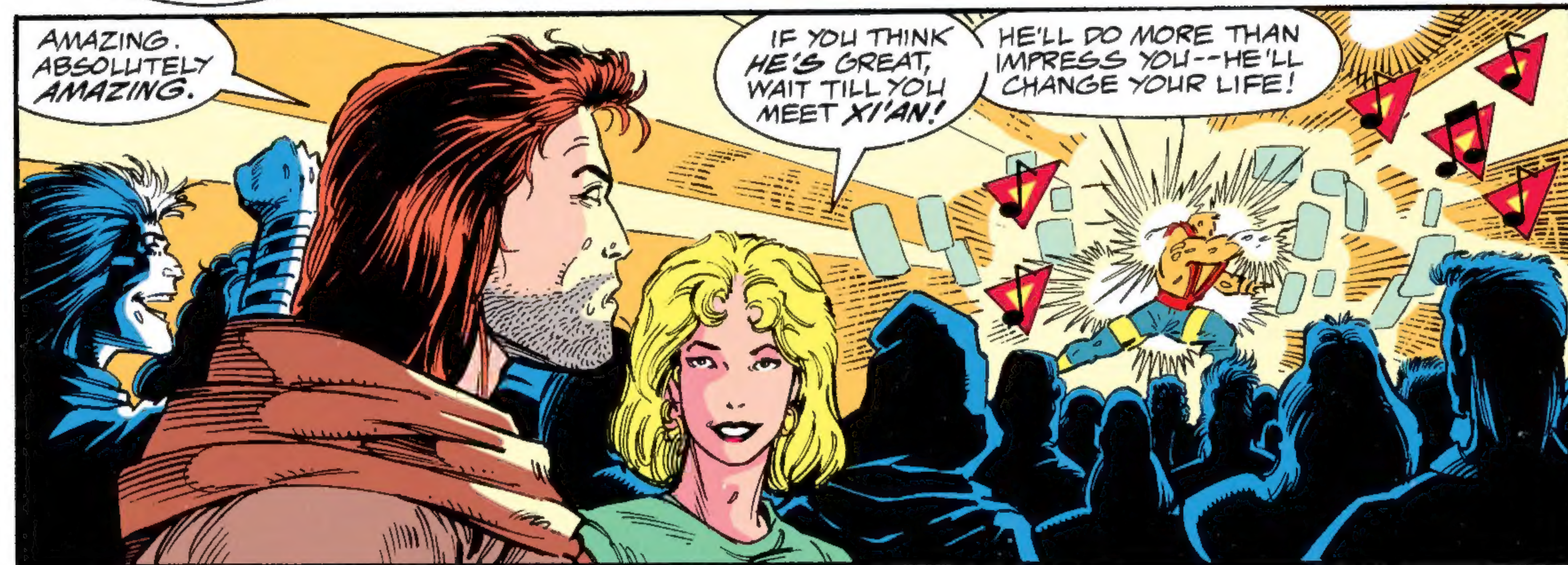
EACH OF HIS CHOREOGRAPHED MOVEMENTS TRIGGER ANOTHER SOUND VARIATION.

NOW WATCH. EDDIE'S A MUTANT. HE HAS A METALLIC MIMETIC ABILITY.



HIS BODY ADOPTS THE PROPERTIES OF ANY METAL HE TOUCHES.

BY CHANGING THE TEXTURE OF HIS BODY, HE CHANGES THE SOUND BOUNCING OFF HIS BODY.



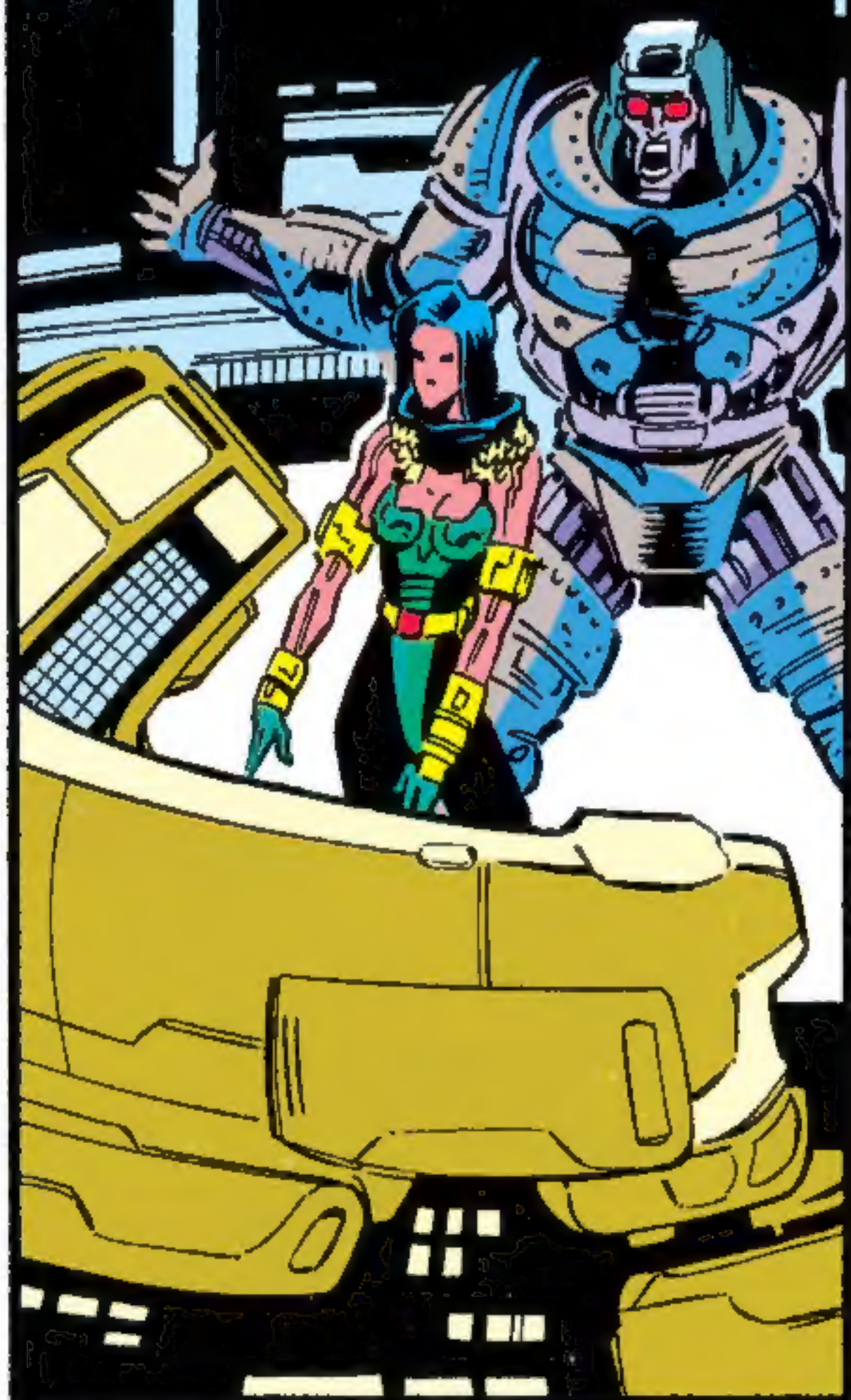
AMAZING. ABSOLUTELY AMAZING.

IF YOU THINK HE'S GREAT, WAIT TILL YOU MEET XI'AN!

HE'LL DO MORE THAN IMPRESS YOU--HE'LL CHANGE YOUR LIFE!

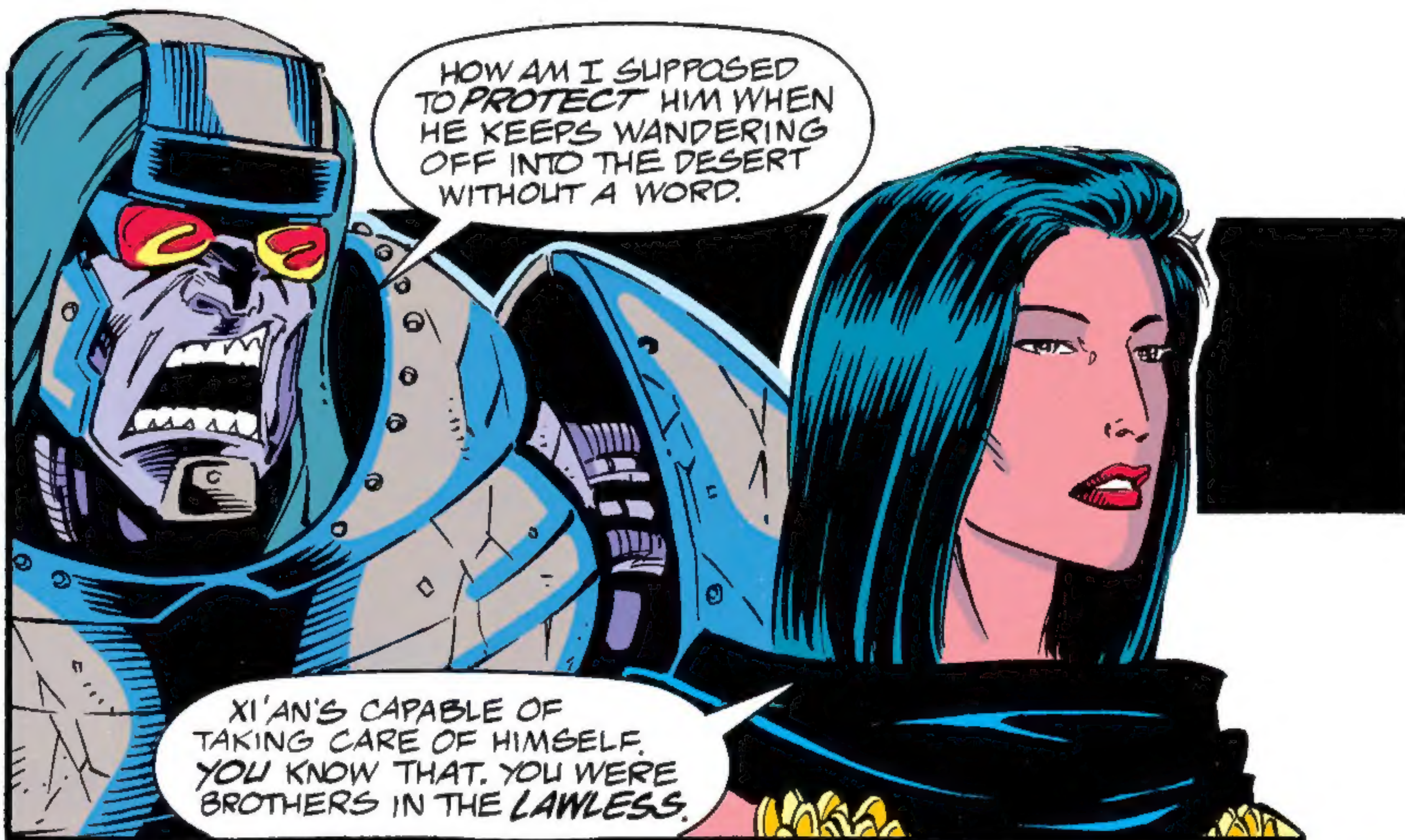
BELOW THE GATHERING FESTIVITIES, IN A SECURITY ROOM ON A LOWER LEVEL...

WHERE IS XI'AN, SHAKTI?



HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO PROTECT HIM WHEN HE KEEPS WANDERING OFF INTO THE DESERT WITHOUT A WORD.

XI'AN'S CAPABLE OF TAKING CARE OF HIMSELF. YOU KNOW THAT. YOU WERE BROTHERS IN THE LAWLESS.



XI'AN'S CHANGED SINCE HE RETURNED FROM SAIGON. THESE MESSIANIC DELUSIONS OF HIS WILL COST US ALL.



WE'RE MUTANTS. WE HAVE POWER TO DO WHAT WE PLEASE. XI'AN IS A FOOL NOT TO USE--

FEEL THE SHARP PAIN AT THE BASE OF YOUR SKULL? THAT'S MY TELEPATHIC DAMPENING POWERS DULLING YOUR MOTOR FUNCTIONS.

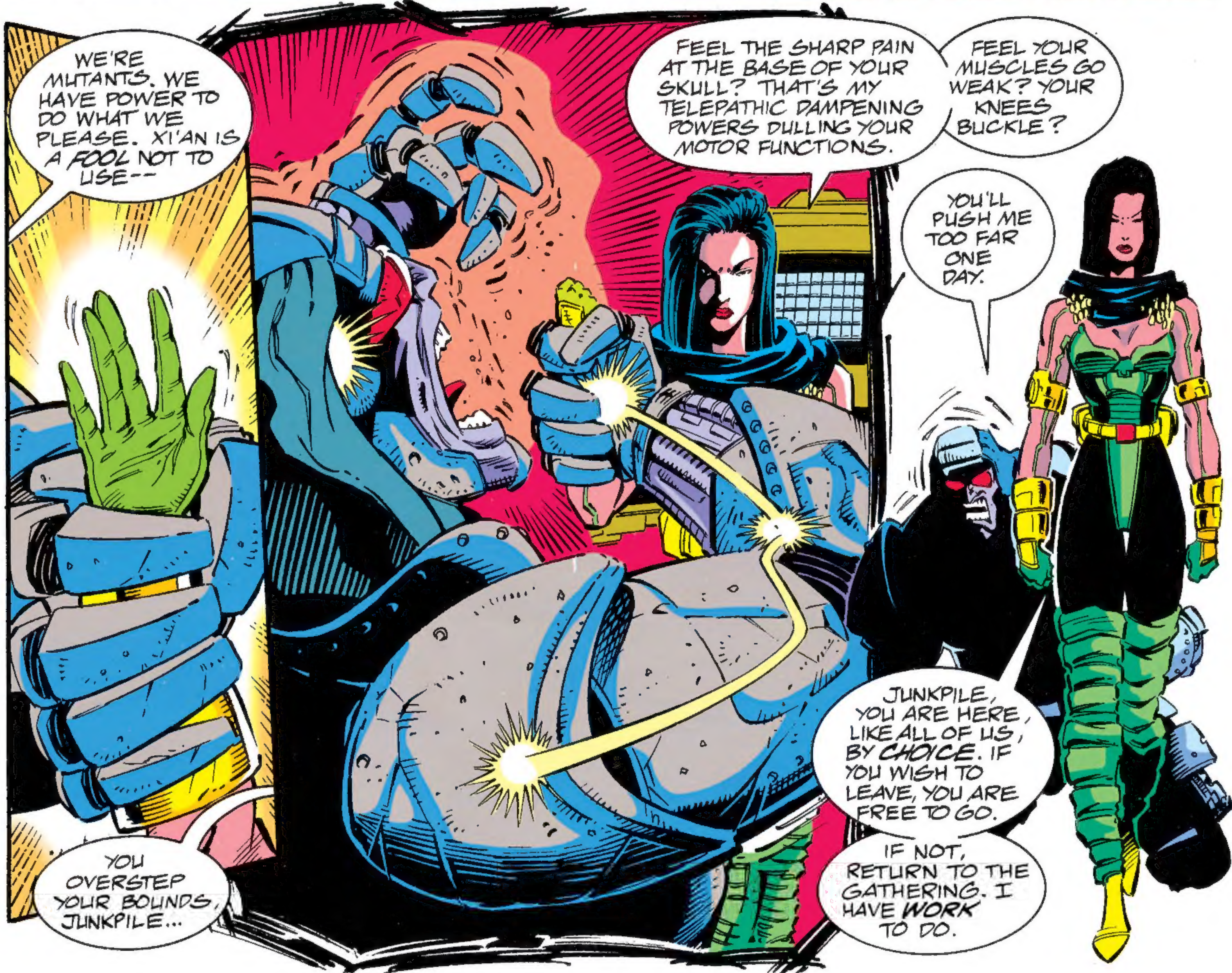
FEEL YOUR MUSCLES GO WEAK? YOUR KNEES BUCKLE?

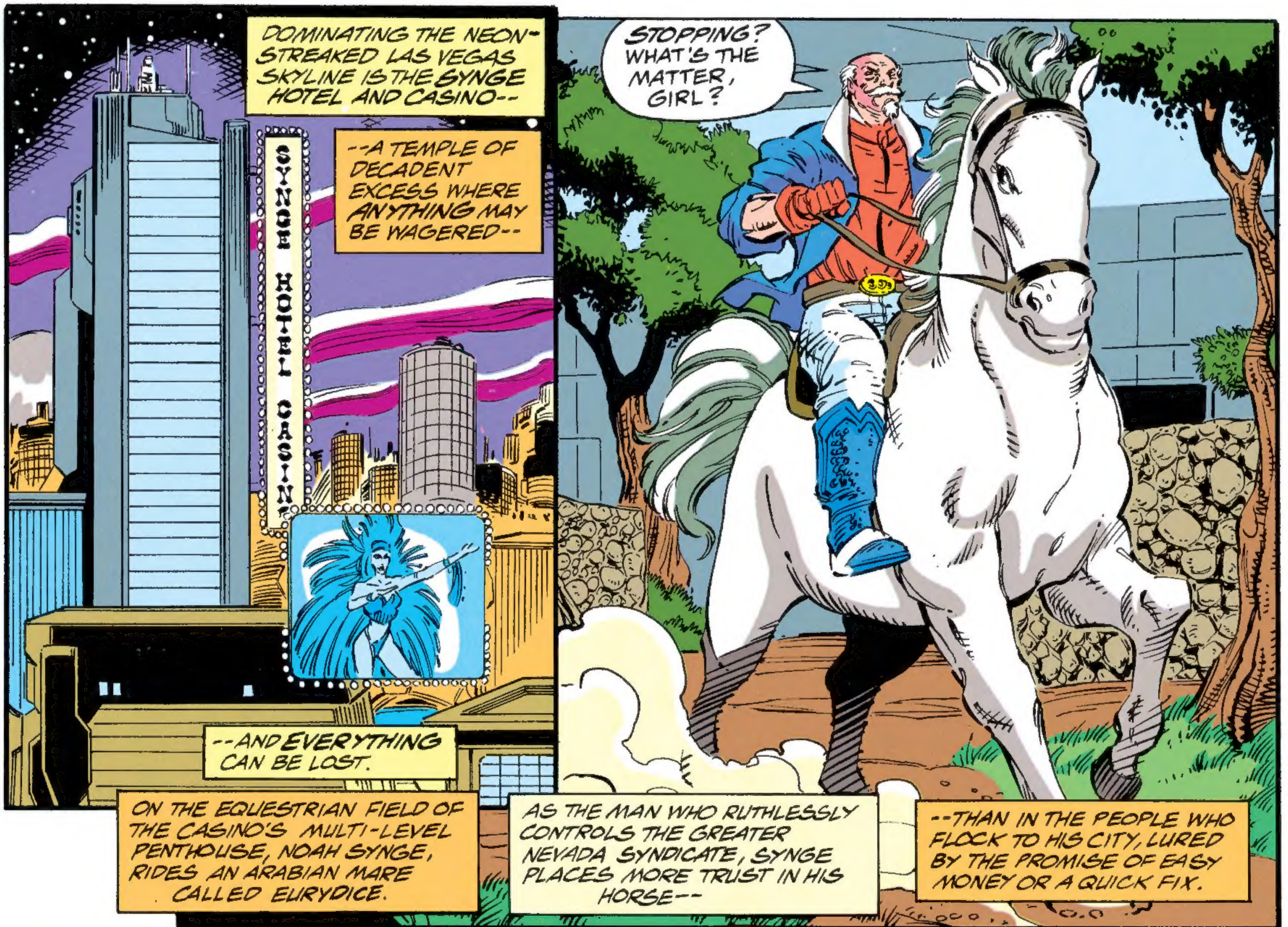
YOU'LL PUSH ME TOO FAR ONE DAY.

JUNKPILE, YOU ARE HERE, LIKE ALL OF US, BY CHOICE. IF YOU WISH TO LEAVE, YOU ARE FREE TO GO.

IF NOT, RETURN TO THE GATHERING. I HAVE WORK TO DO.

YOU OVERSTEP YOUR BOUNDS, JUNKPILE...





DOMINATING THE NEON-STREAKED LAS VEGAS SKYLINE IS THE SYNGE HOTEL AND CASINO--

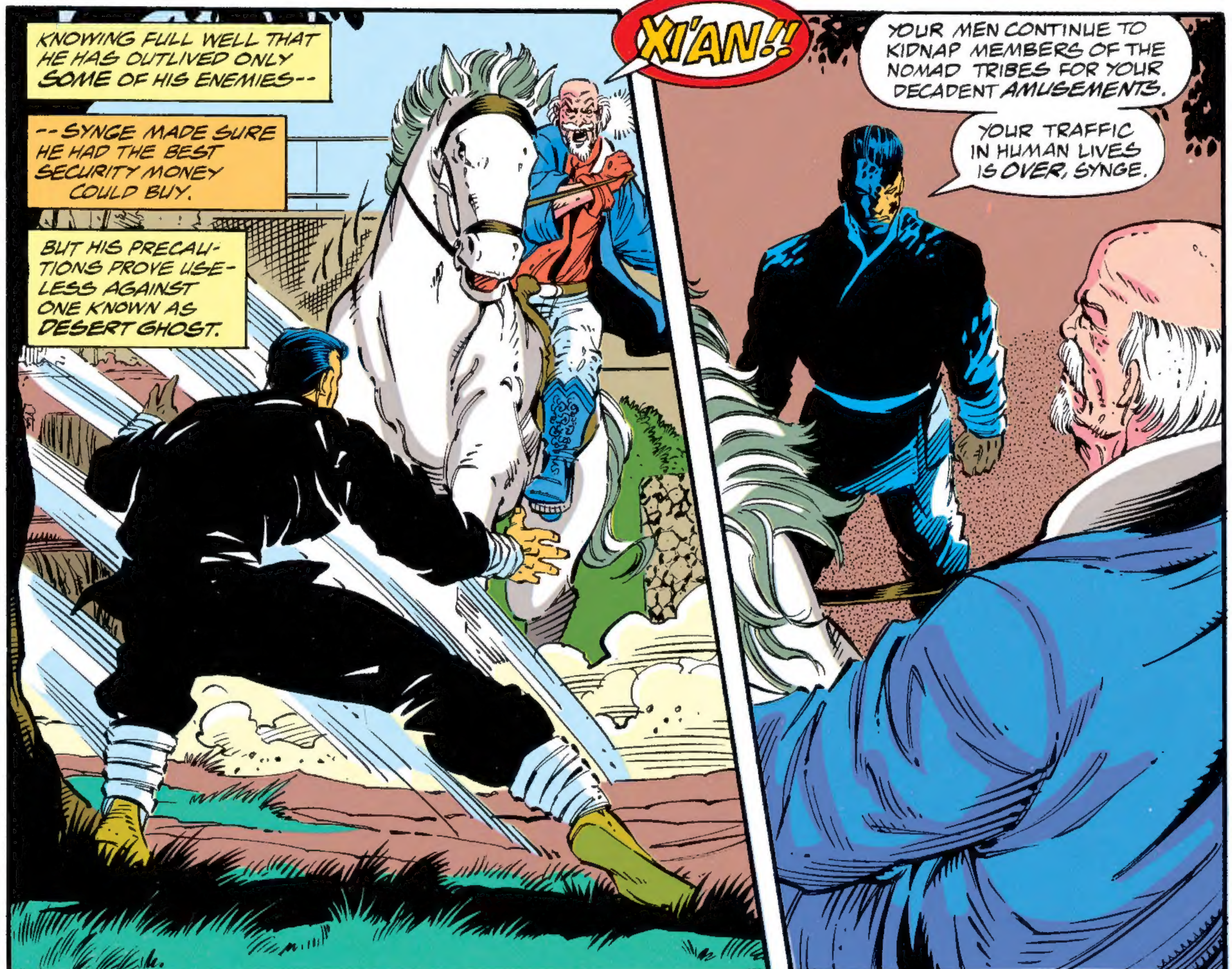
--A TEMPLE OF DECADENT EXCESS WHERE ANYTHING MAY BE WAGERED--

--AND EVERYTHING CAN BE LOST.

ON THE EQUESTRIAN FIELD OF THE CASINO'S MULTI-LEVEL PENTHOUSE, NOAH SYNGE, RIDES AN ARABIAN MARE CALLED EURYDICE.

AS THE MAN WHO RUTHLESSLY CONTROLS THE GREATER NEVADA SYNDICATE, SYNGE PLACES MORE TRUST IN HIS HORSE--

--THAN IN THE PEOPLE WHO FLOCK TO HIS CITY, LURED BY THE PROMISE OF EASY MONEY OR A QUICK FIX.



KNOWING FULL WELL THAT HE HAS OUTLIVED ONLY SOME OF HIS ENEMIES--

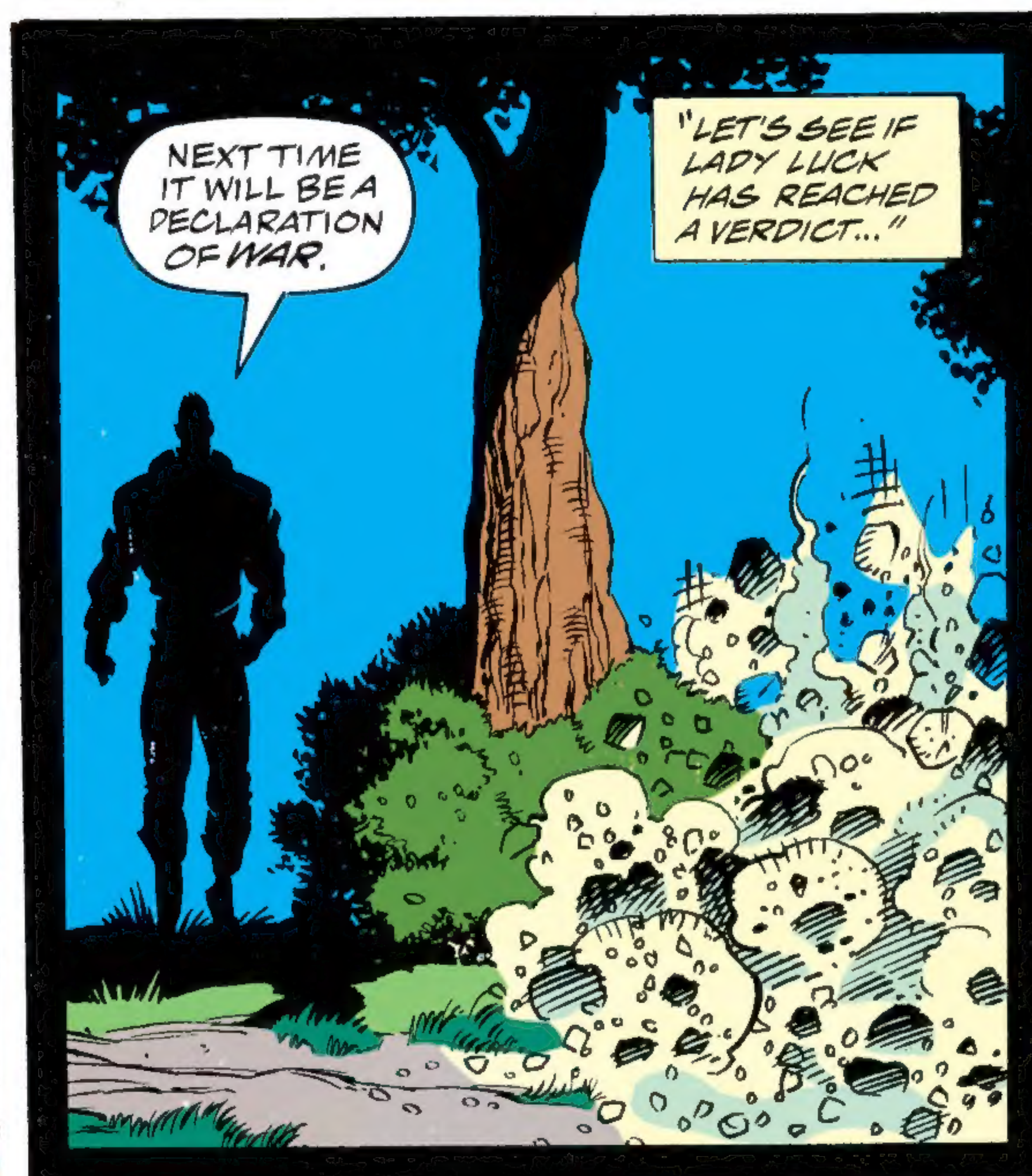
--SYNGE MADE SURE HE HAD THE BEST SECURITY MONEY COULD BUY.

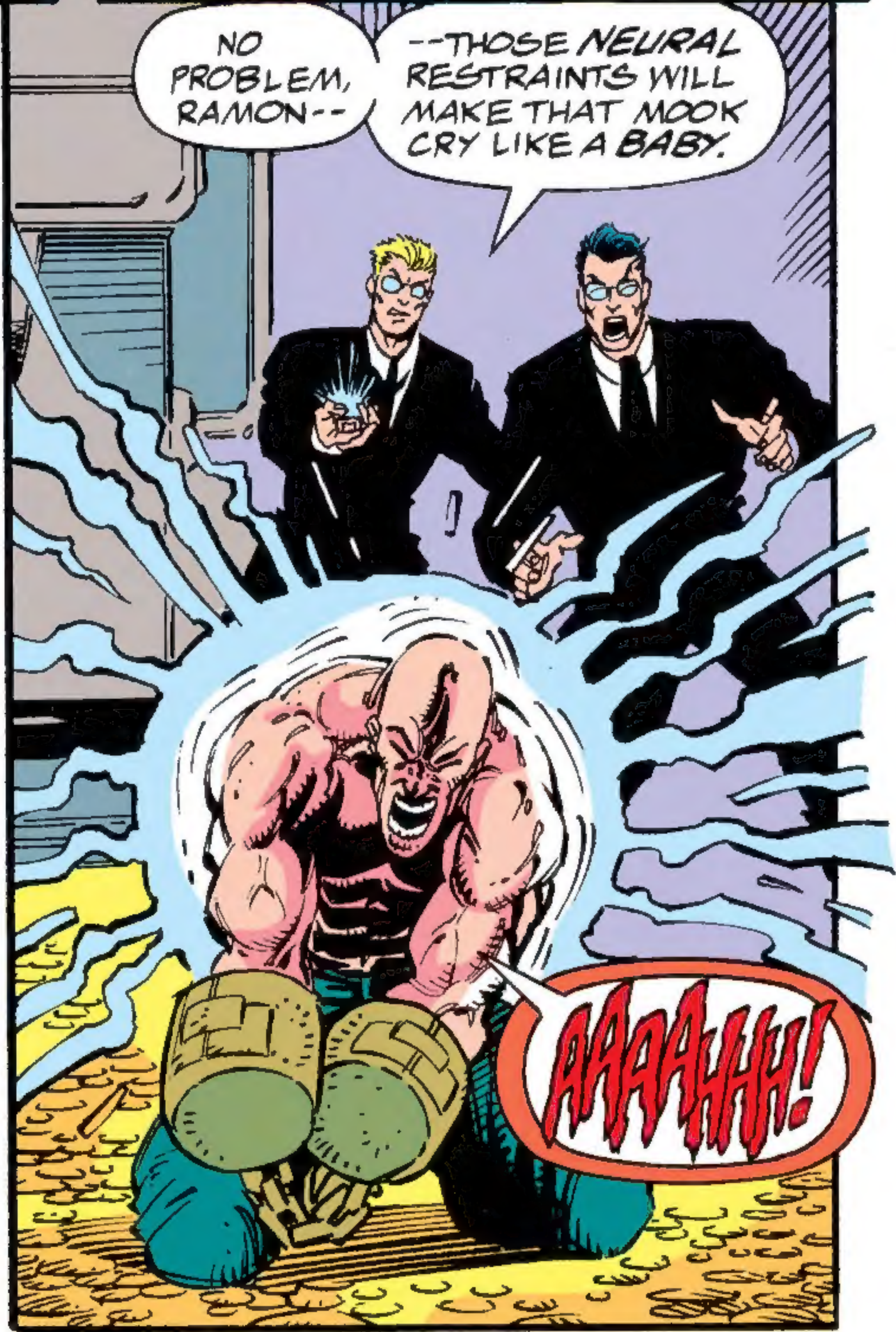
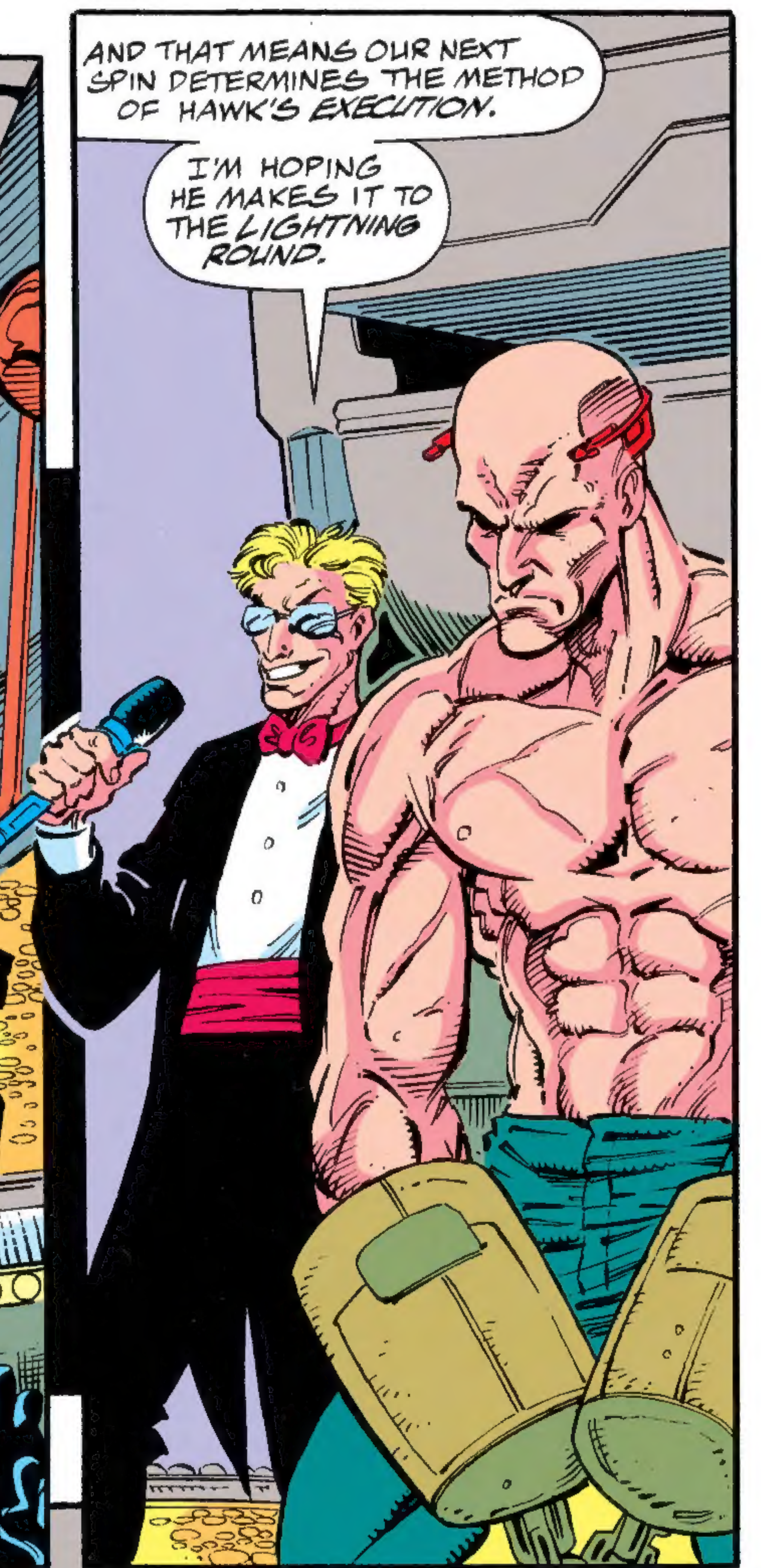
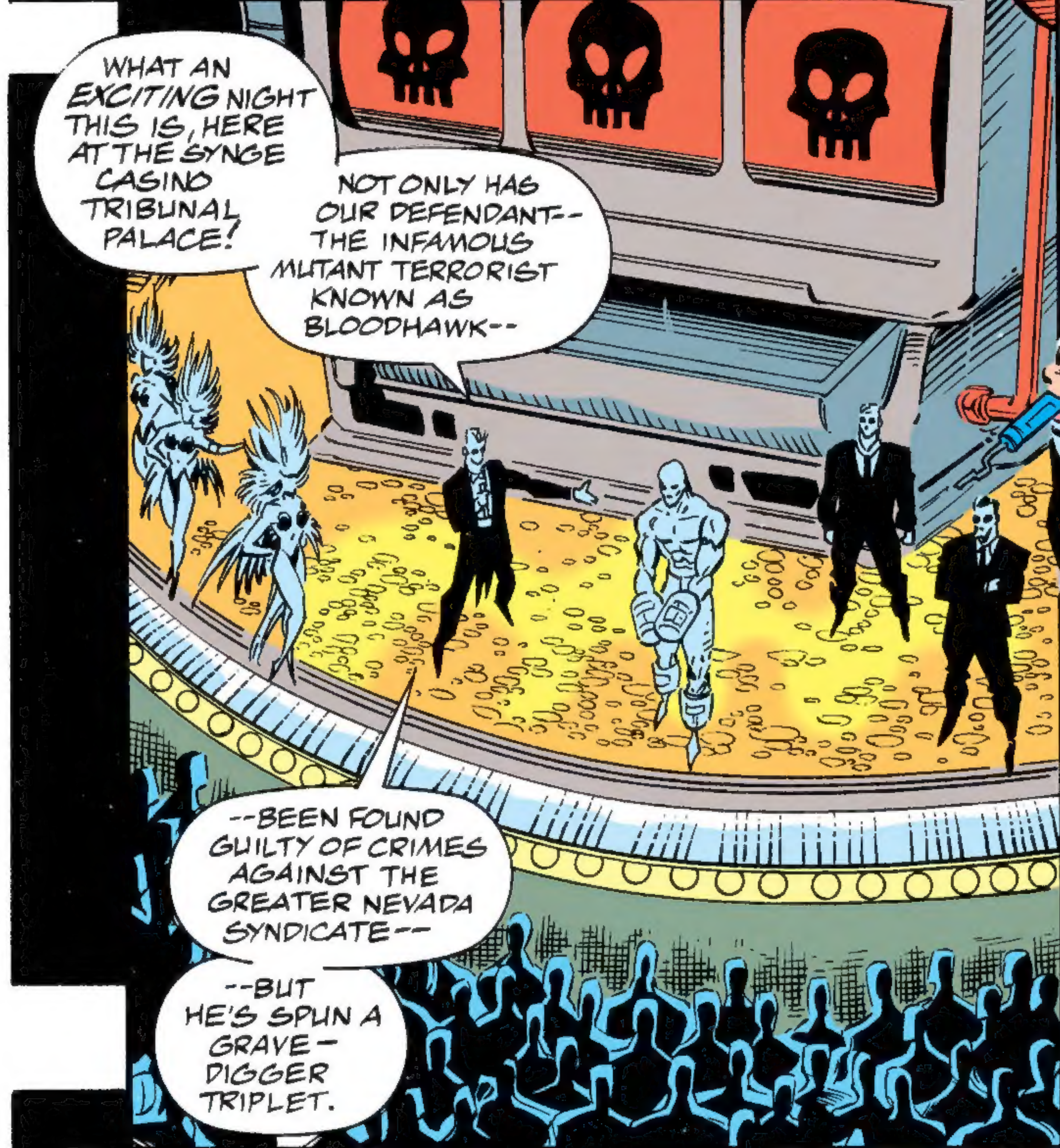
BUT HIS PRECAUTIONS PROVE USELESS AGAINST ONE KNOWN AS DESERT GHOST.

**XI'AN!!**

YOUR MEN CONTINUE TO KIDNAP MEMBERS OF THE NOMAD TRIBES FOR YOUR DECADENT AMUSEMENTS.

YOUR TRAFFIC IN HUMAN LIVES IS OVER, SYNGE.





K-CHING

K-CHING

K-CHING

WHAT AN  
EXCITING NIGHT  
THIS IS, HERE  
AT THE SYNGE  
CASINO  
TRIBUNAL  
PALACE!

NOT ONLY HAS  
OUR DEFENDANT--  
THE INFAMOUS  
MUTANT TERRORIST  
KNOWN AS  
BLOODHAWK--

--BEEN FOUND  
GUILTY OF CRIMES  
AGAINST THE  
GREATER NEVADA  
SYNDICATE--

--BUT  
HE'S SPUN A  
GRAVE-  
DIGGER  
TRIPLET.

I BET TWENTY  
THOUSAND  
VOLTS WILL BRING  
SOME EXPRESSION  
TO THAT STONE  
FA--

GO TO  
THE DEVIL,  
CLOWN!

WE GOT A  
SITUATION,  
SAL!

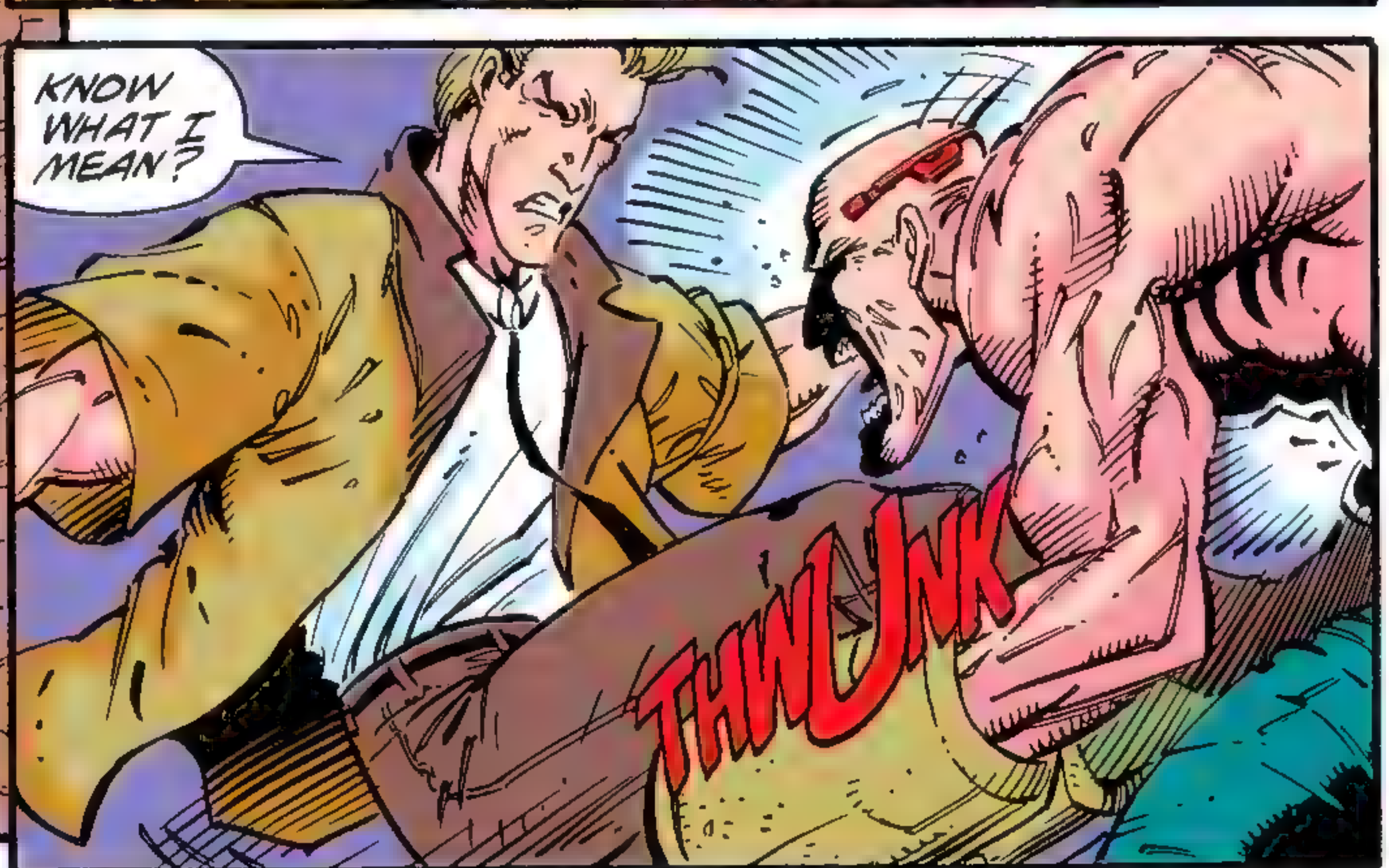
AND THAT MEANS OUR NEXT  
SPIN DETERMINES THE METHOD  
OF HAWK'S EXECUTION.

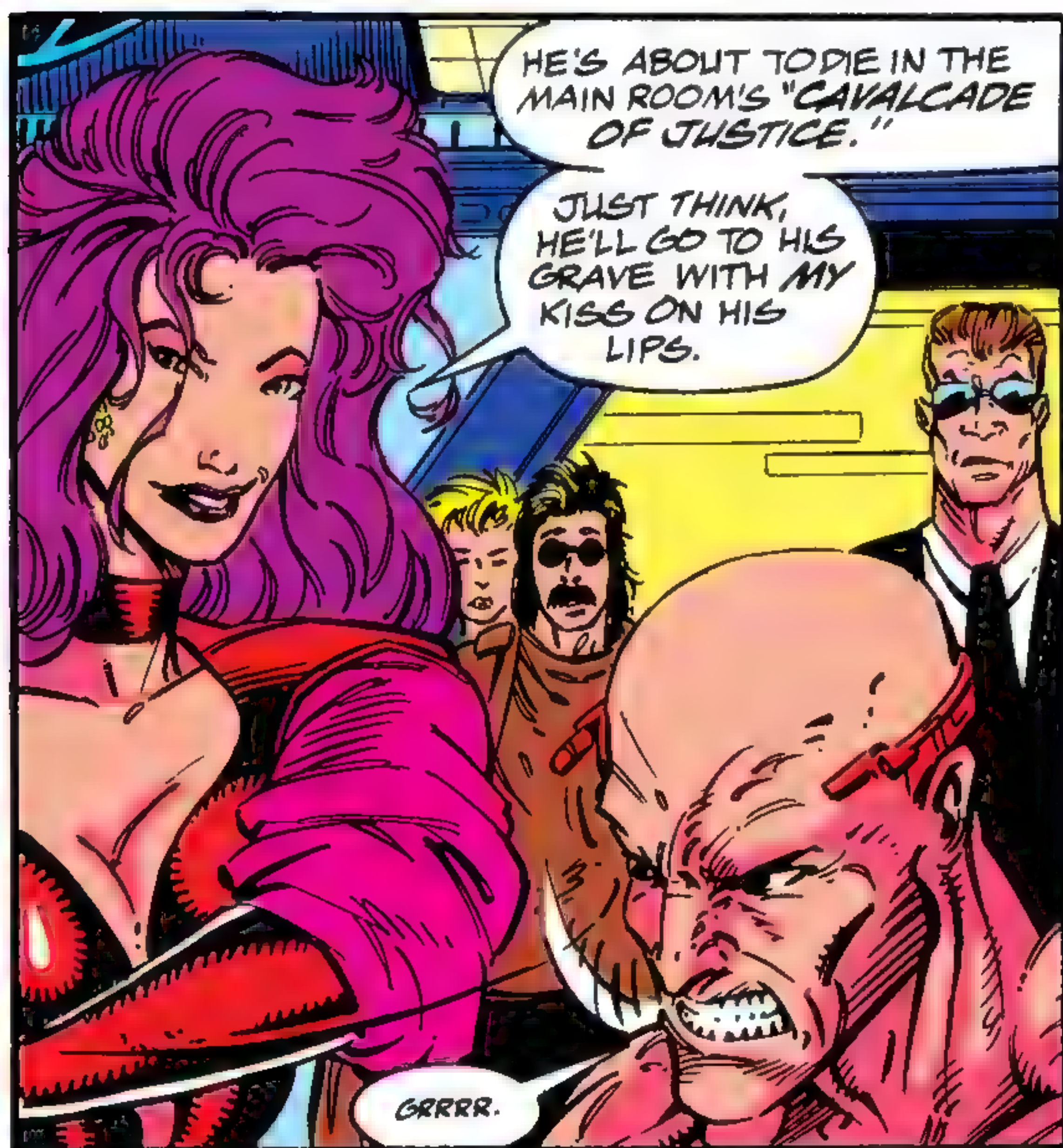
I'M HOPING  
HE MAKES IT TO  
THE LIGHTNING  
ROUND.

NO  
PROBLEM,  
RAMON--

--THOSE NEURAL  
RESTRAINTS WILL  
MAKE THAT MOOK  
CRY LIKE A BABY.

AAAAHHH!

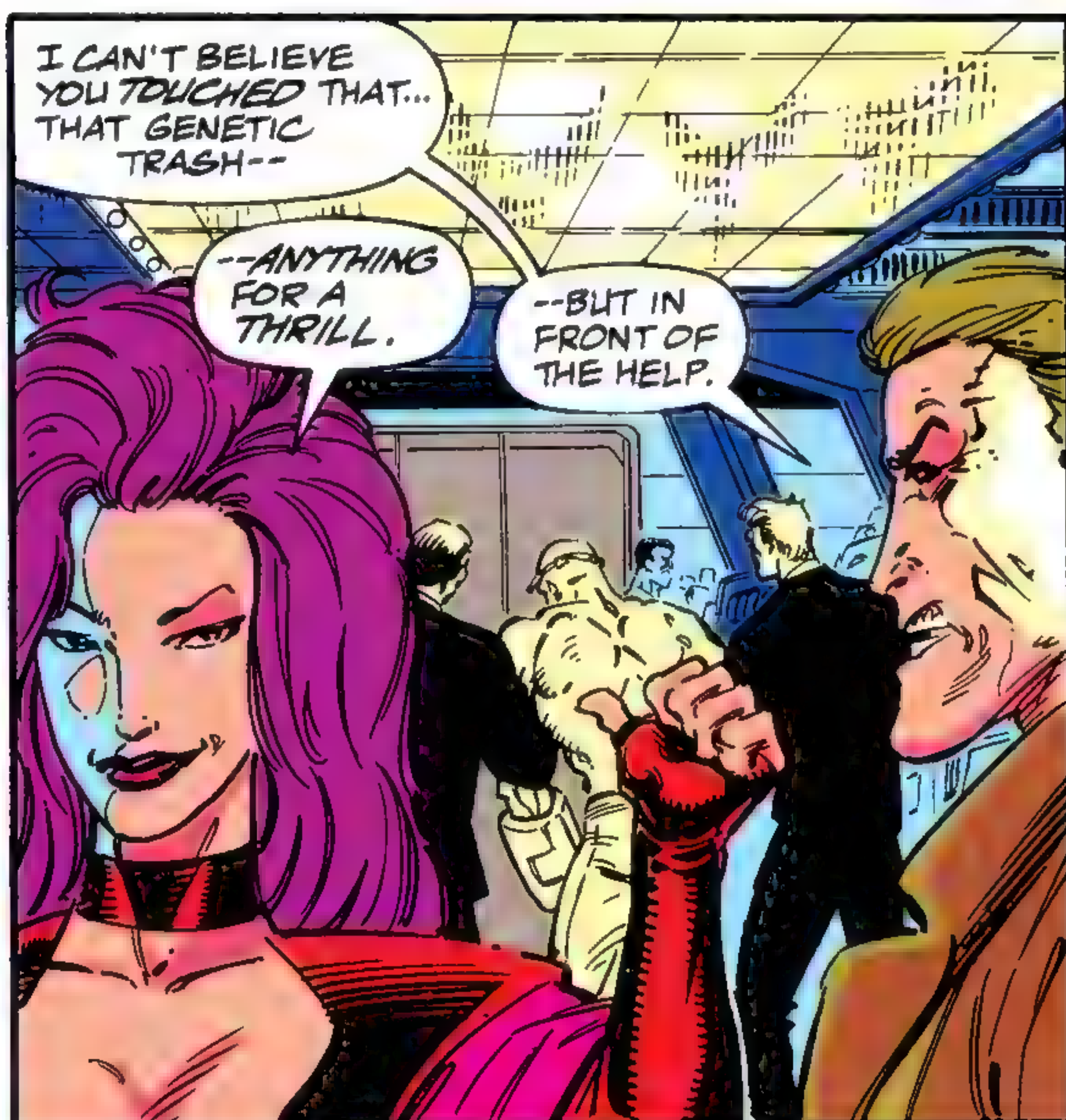




HE'S ABOUT TO DIE IN THE MAIN ROOM'S "CAVALCADE OF JUSTICE."

JUST THINK, HE'LL GO TO HIS GRAVE WITH MY KISS ON HIS LIPS.

GRRRR.



I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU TOUCHED THAT... THAT GENETIC TRASH--

--ANYTHING FOR A THRILL.

--BUT IN FRONT OF THE HELP.

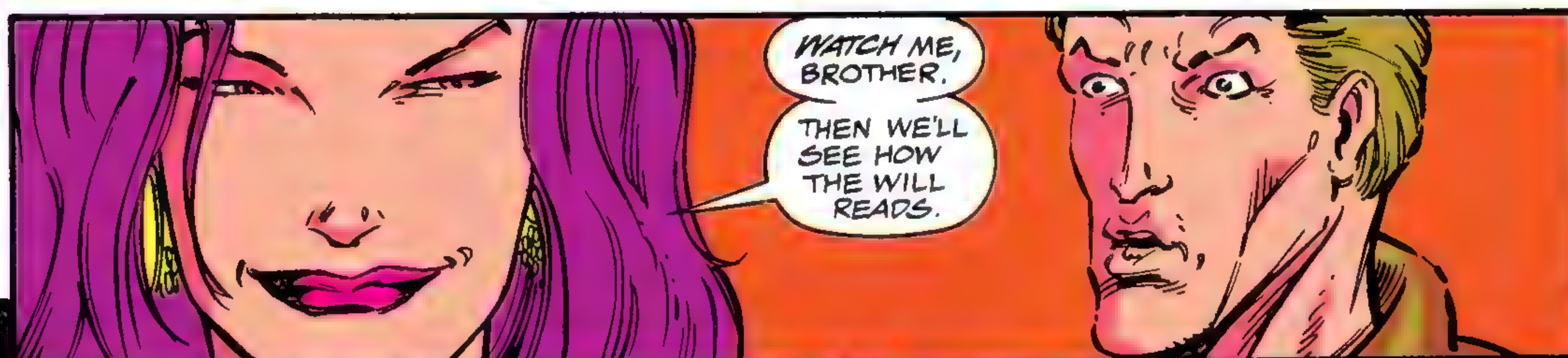


DON'T LECTURE ME, LYTTON--

--OR I'LL TELL DADDY ABOUT YOUR BUSINESS DEALINGS WITH ALCHEMAX.

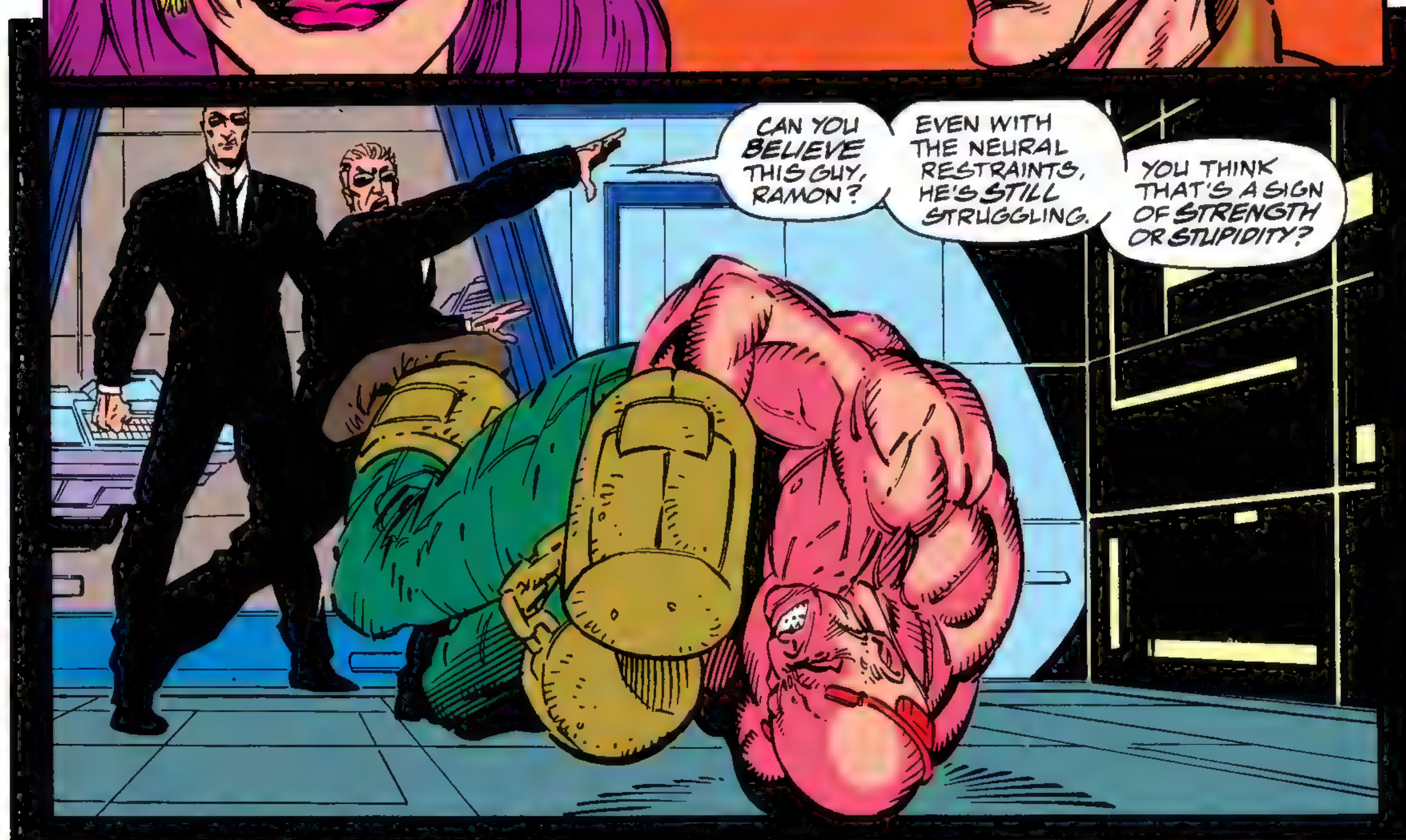
YOU KNOW HOW HE HATES THE MEGA-CORPS.

YOU WOULDN'T DARE.



WATCH ME, BROTHER.

THEN WE'LL SEE HOW THE WILL READS.



CAN YOU BELIEVE THIS GUY, RAMON?

EVEN WITH THE NEURAL RESTRAINTS, HE'S STILL STRUGGLING.

YOU THINK THAT'S A SIGN OF STRENGTH OR STUPIDITY?



Don 83  
Adam Kubert

**X-MEN**  
20th

I DON'T KNOW, MAYBE IT'S HIS MUTROID CHROMOSOMES.

MUTANT. MUTROIDS ARE THOSE FREAKS ON HELLROCK.

NOT THAT IT MAKES A DIFFERENCE. THEY'RE ALL BIOWASTE TO ME.

RATS. THERE GOES ANOTHER PAYCHECK.

WVVOOOOOOSH

HEY! THE CELL DOOR'S OPENING.

PROBABLY A MALFUNCTION, BUT LET'S NOT TAKE THE--

--CHANCE.

WHAT THE--?

I BELIEVE THE TERM IS JAILBREAK.

DON'T WORRY, THE CRYSTAL I'VE ENCASED YOU IN IS POROUS.

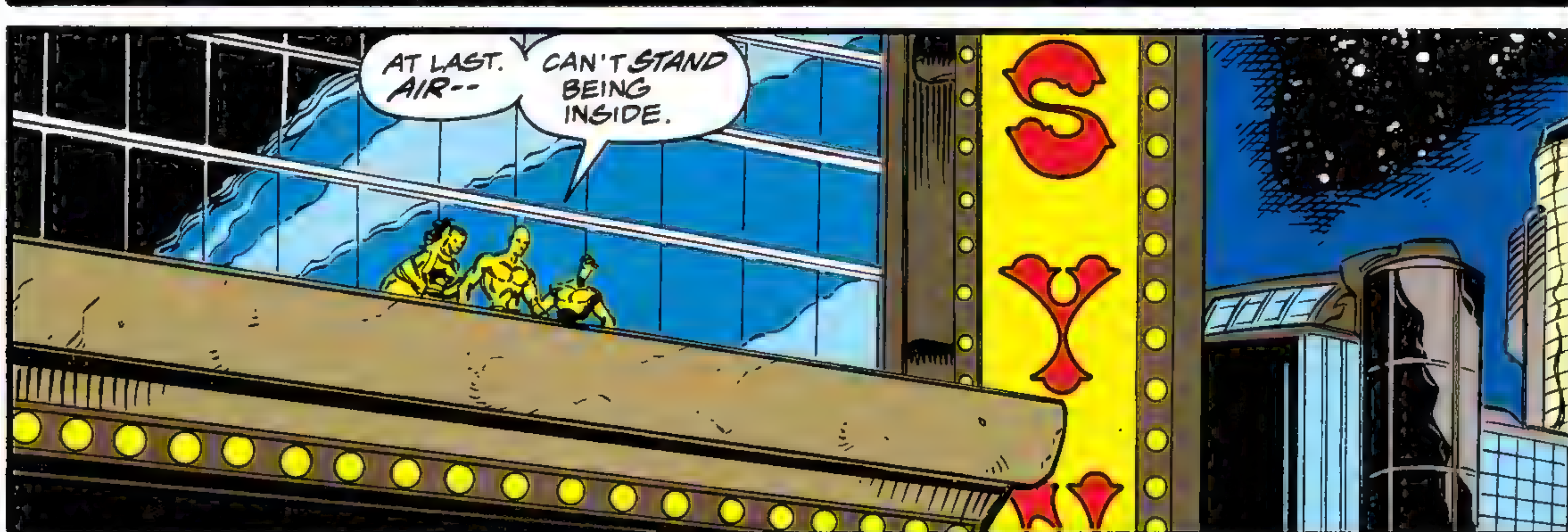
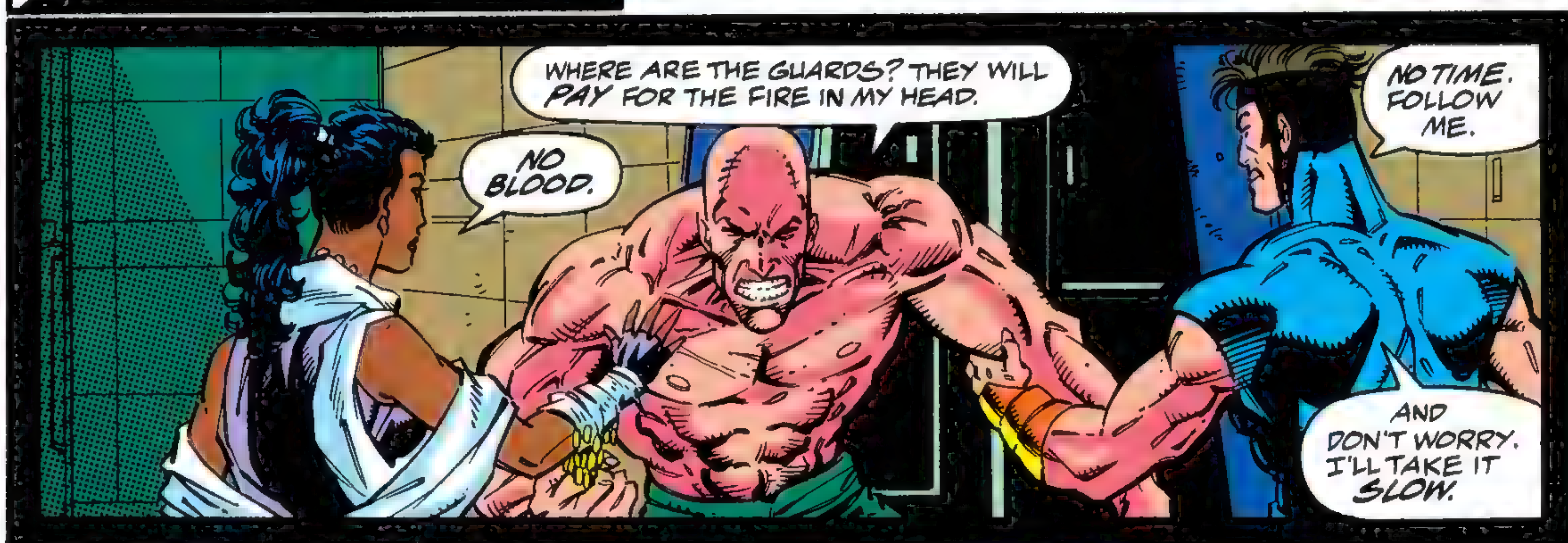
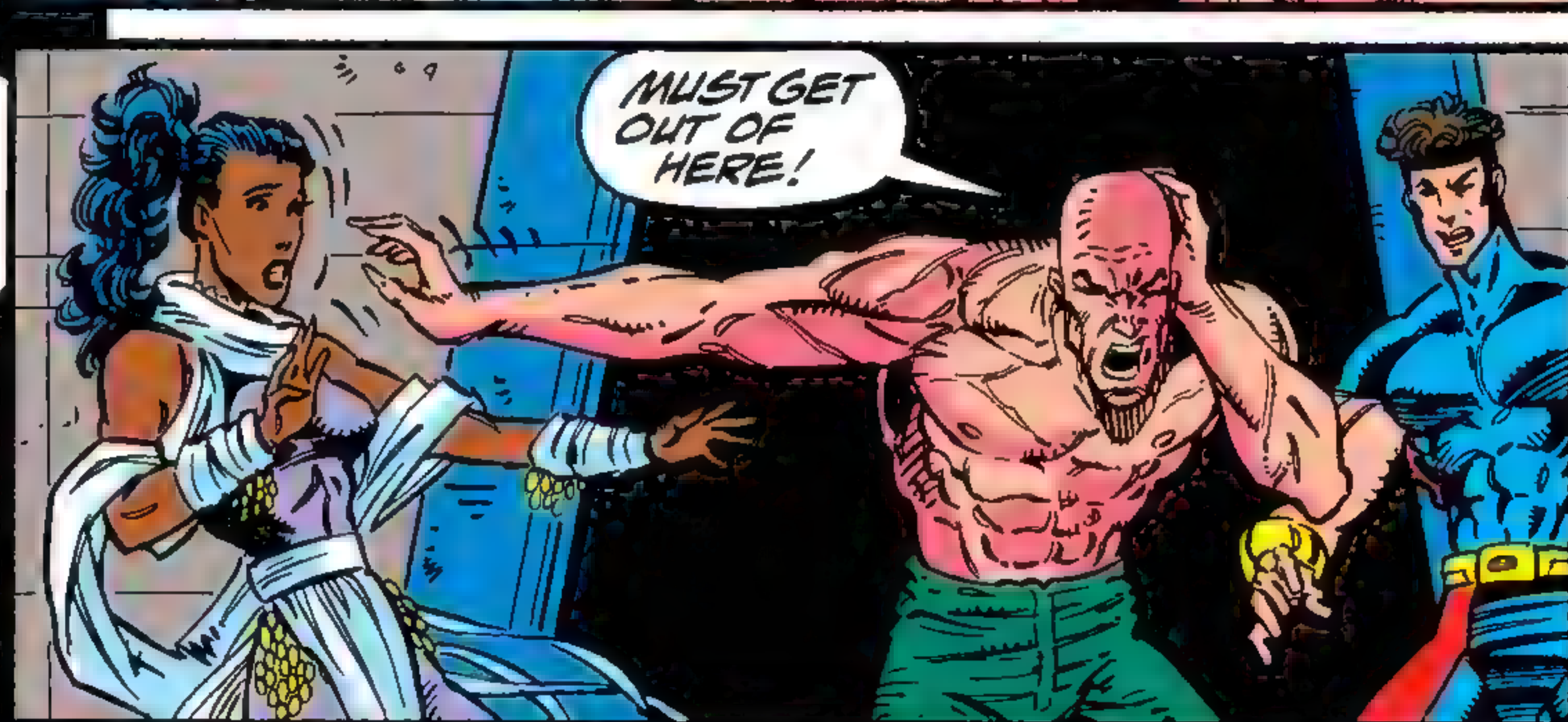
YOU WON'T SUFFOCATE.

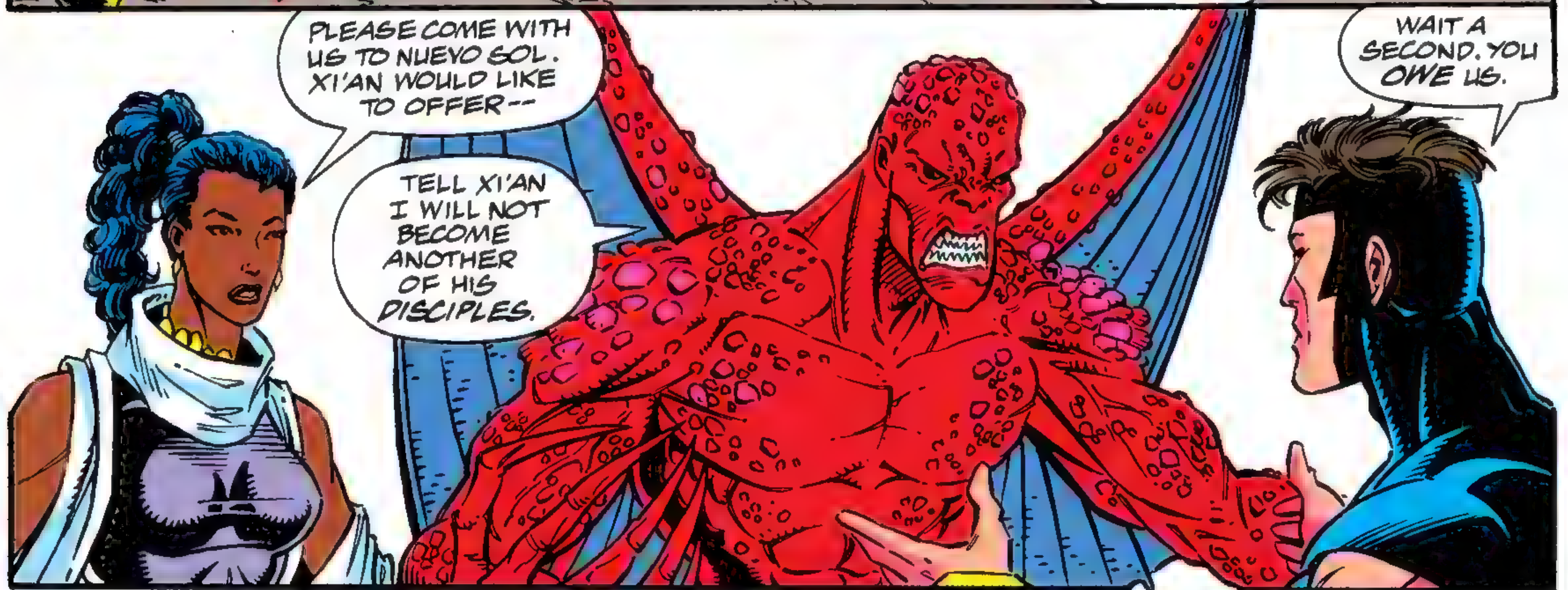
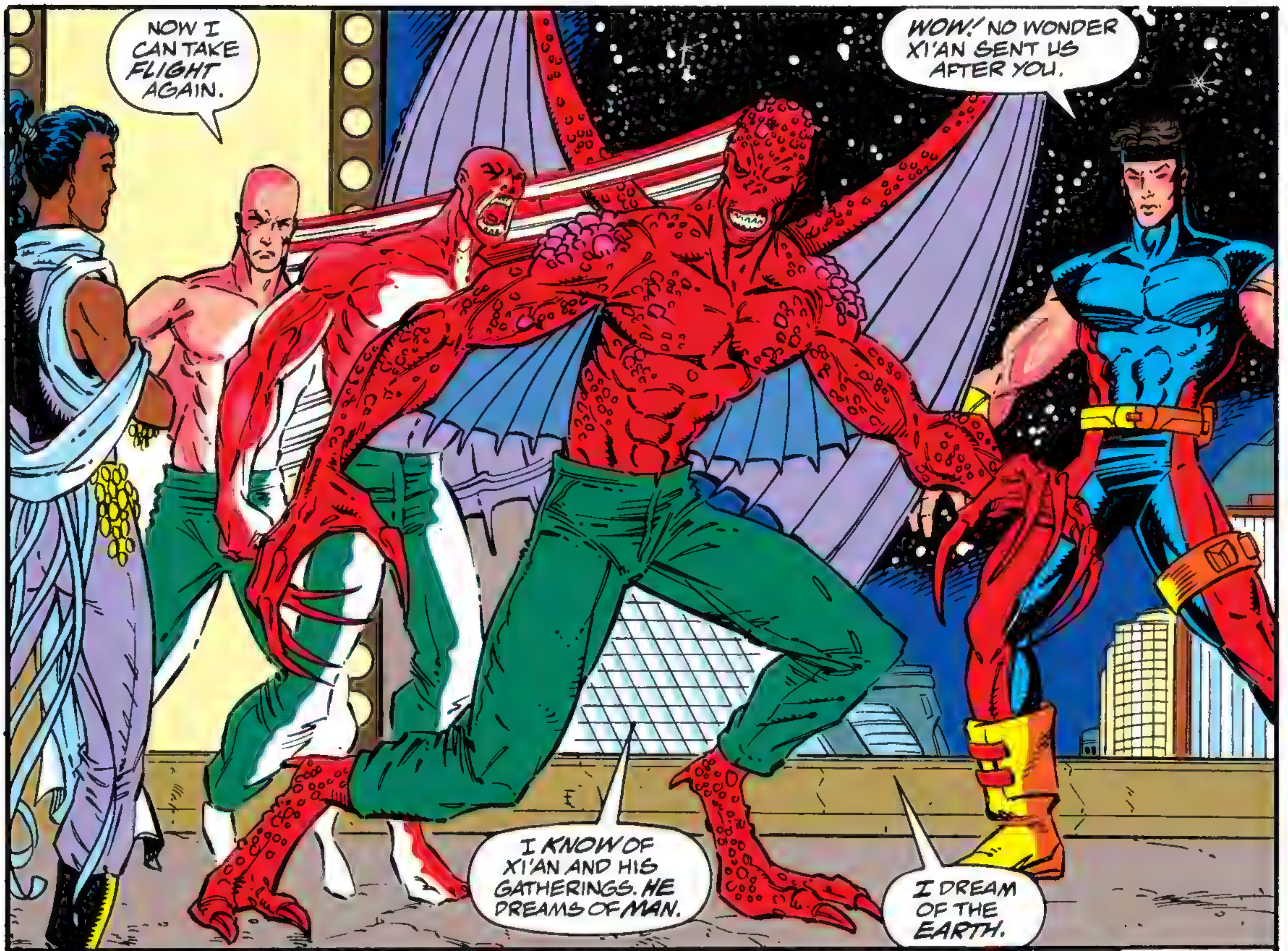
KRYSTALIN, YOU ARE MORE GENEROUS TO THESE THUGS THAN I WOULD BE.

THEY INTENDED TO PUT OUR MUTANT BROTHER TO DEATH FOR AMUSEMENT.

WE CAN ARGUE THE IMPORTANCE OF COMPASSION LATER, MEANSTREAK.

NOW, WE NEED TO SEE BLOODHAWK TO SAFETY.





THE SYNGE STABLES.

BLOODHAWK GOT AWAY? DADDY'S NOT GOING TO BE PLEASED.

HE NEVER IS.

AND HE'LL PROBABLY BLAME ME, THE SENILE OLD COOT.

SENILE? YOU WISH. AT NINETY HE'S SHARPER THAN YOU'LL EVER BE.

DADDY?!?

UGH. WHAT HAPPENED TO HIS BODY?

OH, DADDY, YOU'VE LOOKED BETTER.

GUESS YOU FINALLY UNDERESTIMATED ONE OF YOUR ENEMIES.

ELOP ELOP ELOP ELOP

WHERE IS HE? HIS SECRETARY SAID HE WAS RIDING THIS EVENING.

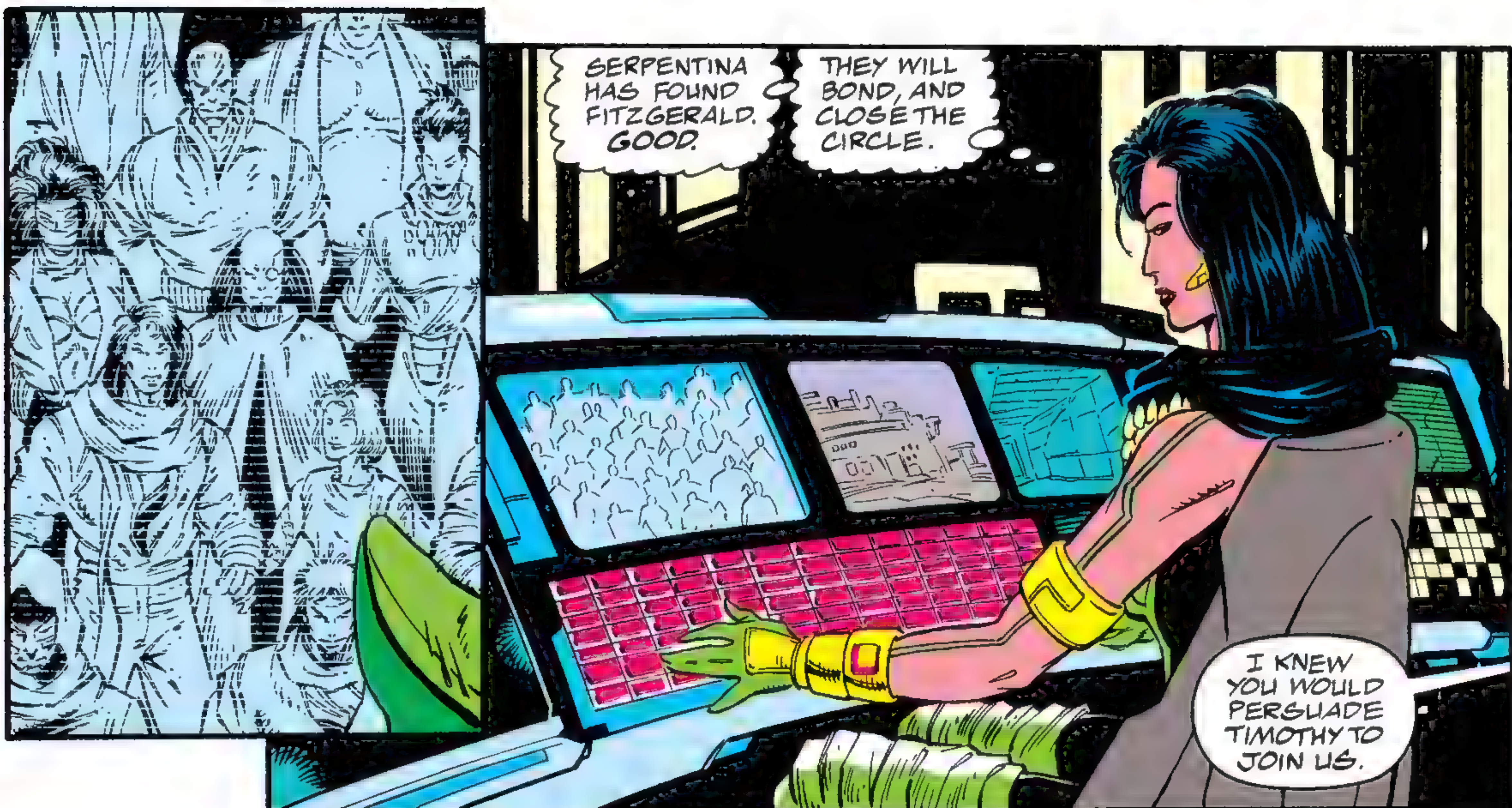
I'VE NEVER UNDERSTOOD HIS INFATUATION WITH THESE WALKING GLUE FACTORIES.

UH, MR. SYNGE... I-IT'S...

THIS IS THE WORK OF THAT MUTANT-- THE ONE WITH THE HAND-- X'IAN CHI XAN.

I WANT ALL THE SECURITY CHIEFS IN MY OFFICE IMMEDIATELY.

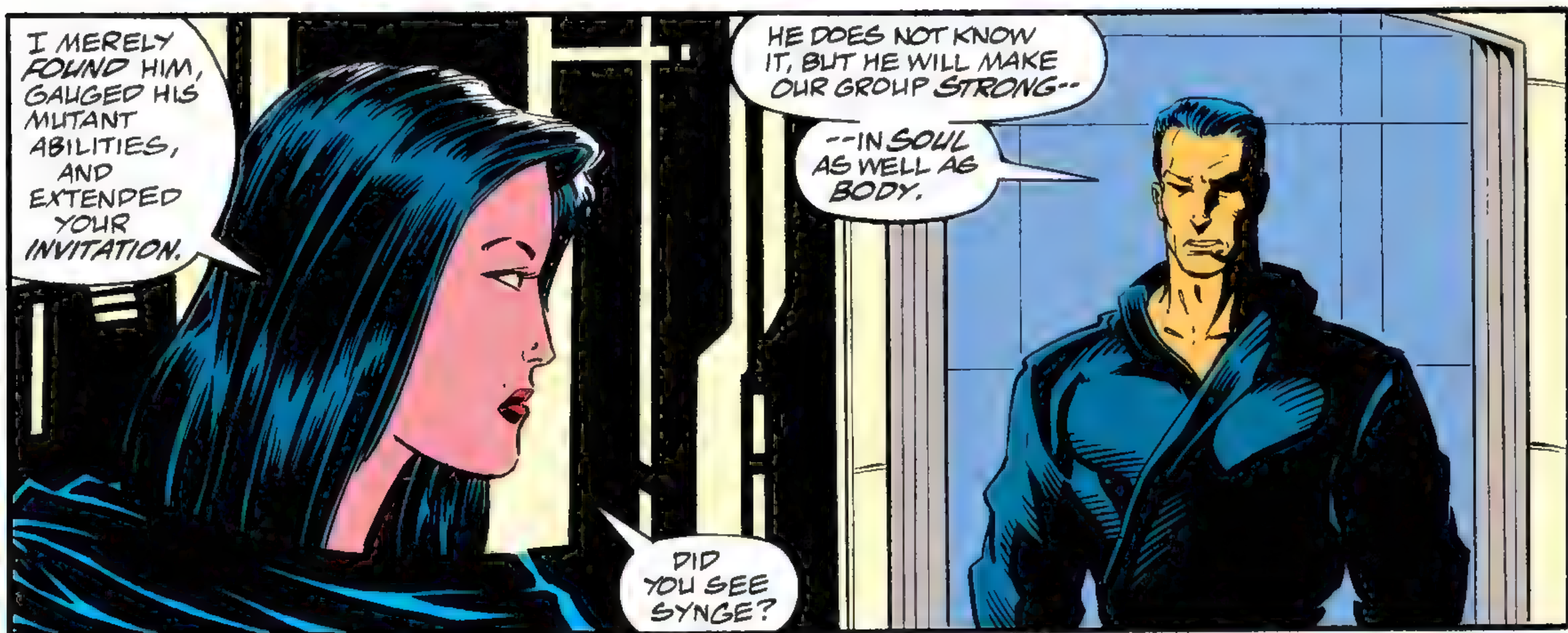
WE'LL MAKE THAT MUTANT WISH HE WAS NEVER BORN.



SERPENTINA HAS FOUND FITZGERALD. GOOD.

THEY WILL BOND, AND CLOSE THE CIRCLE.

I KNEW YOU WOULD PERSUADE TIMOTHY TO JOIN US.

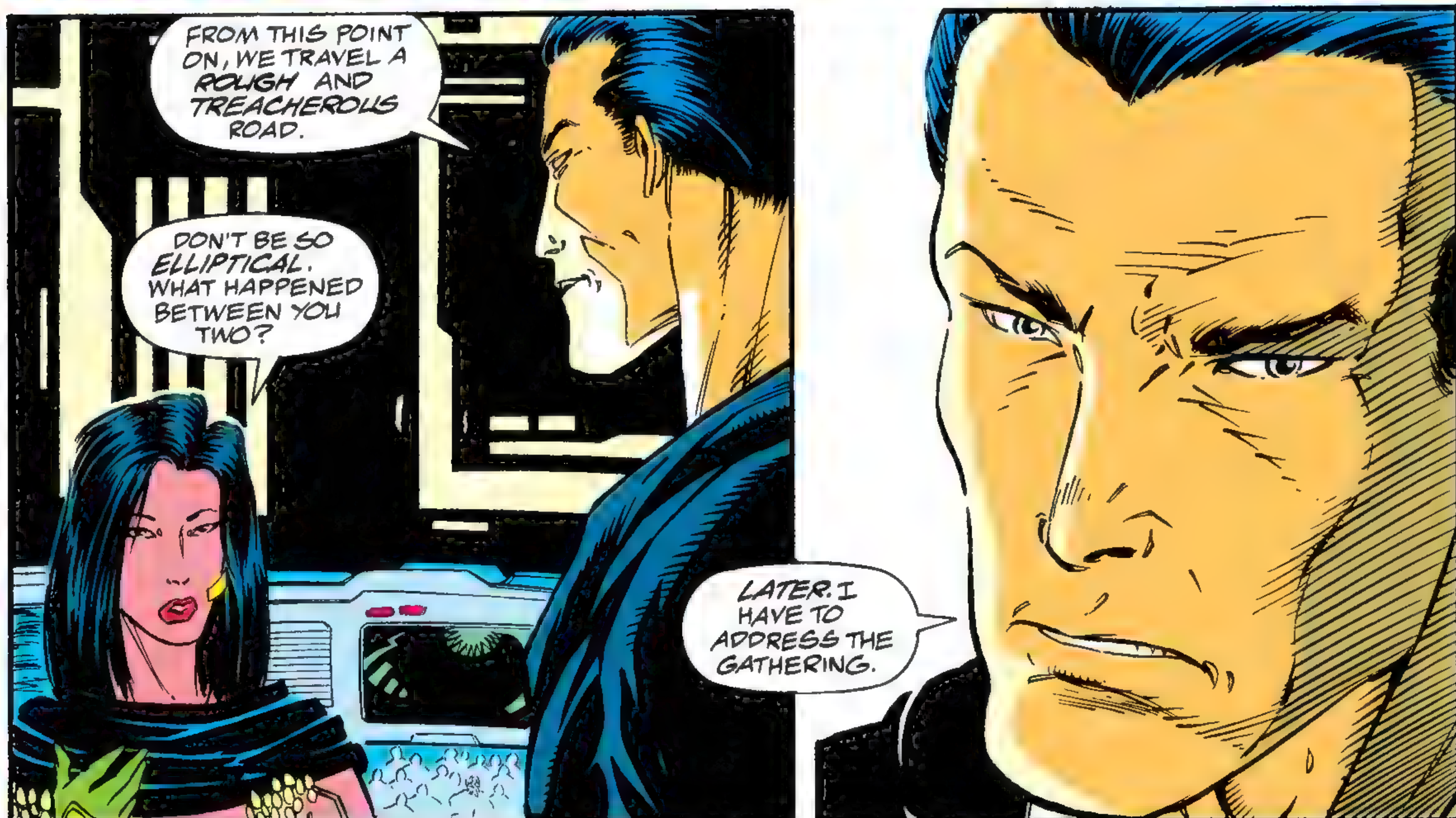


I MERELY FOUND HIM, GAUGED HIS MUTANT ABILITIES, AND EXTENDED YOUR INVITATION.

HE DOES NOT KNOW IT, BUT HE WILL MAKE OUR GROUP STRONG--

--IN SOUL AS WELL AS BODY.

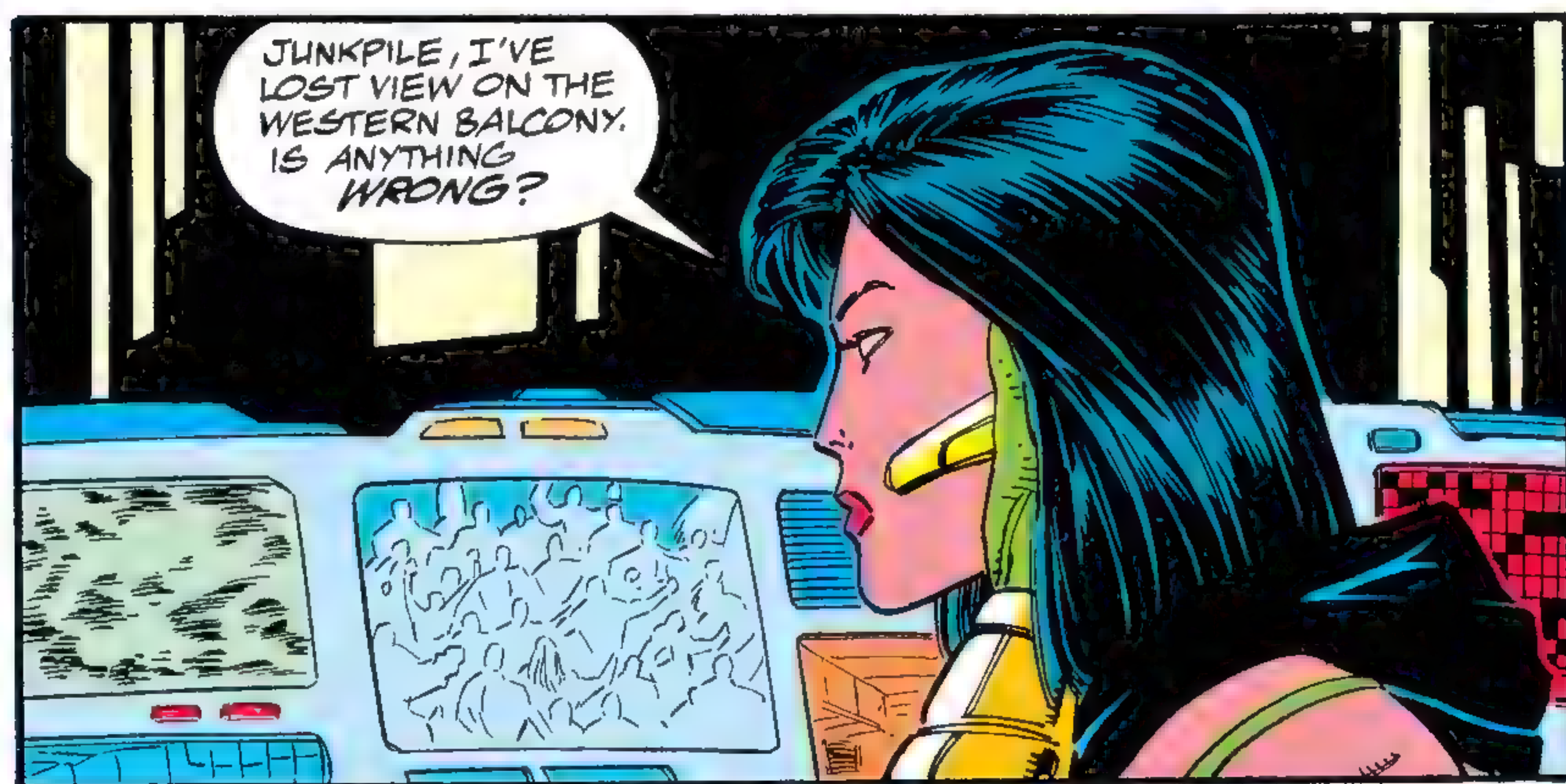
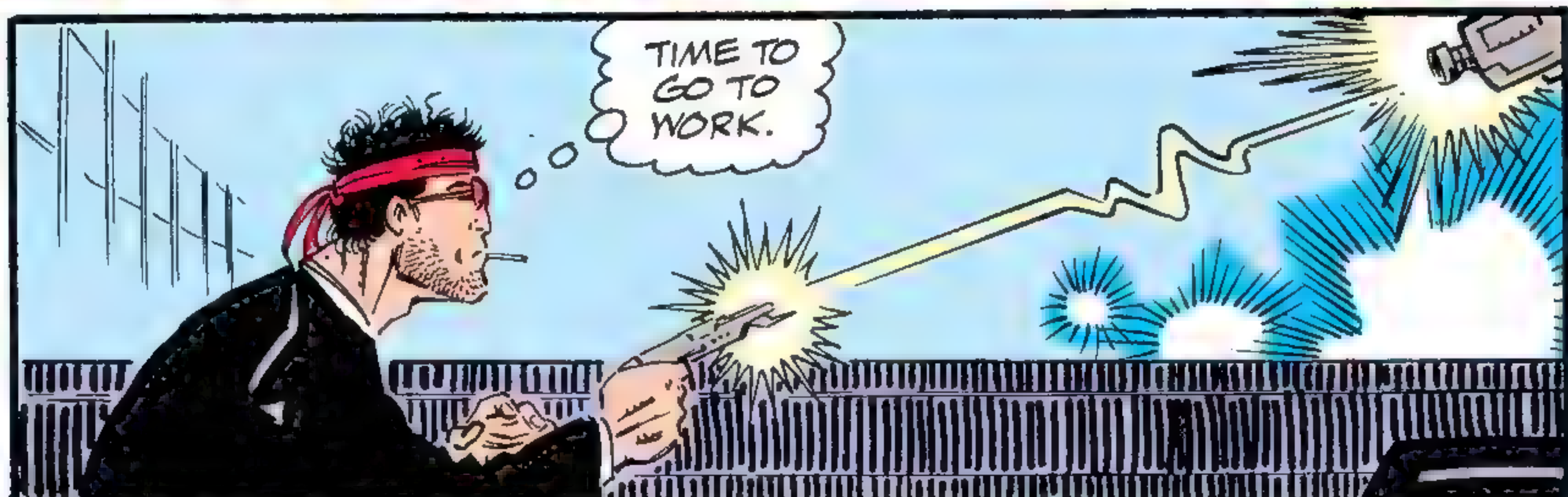
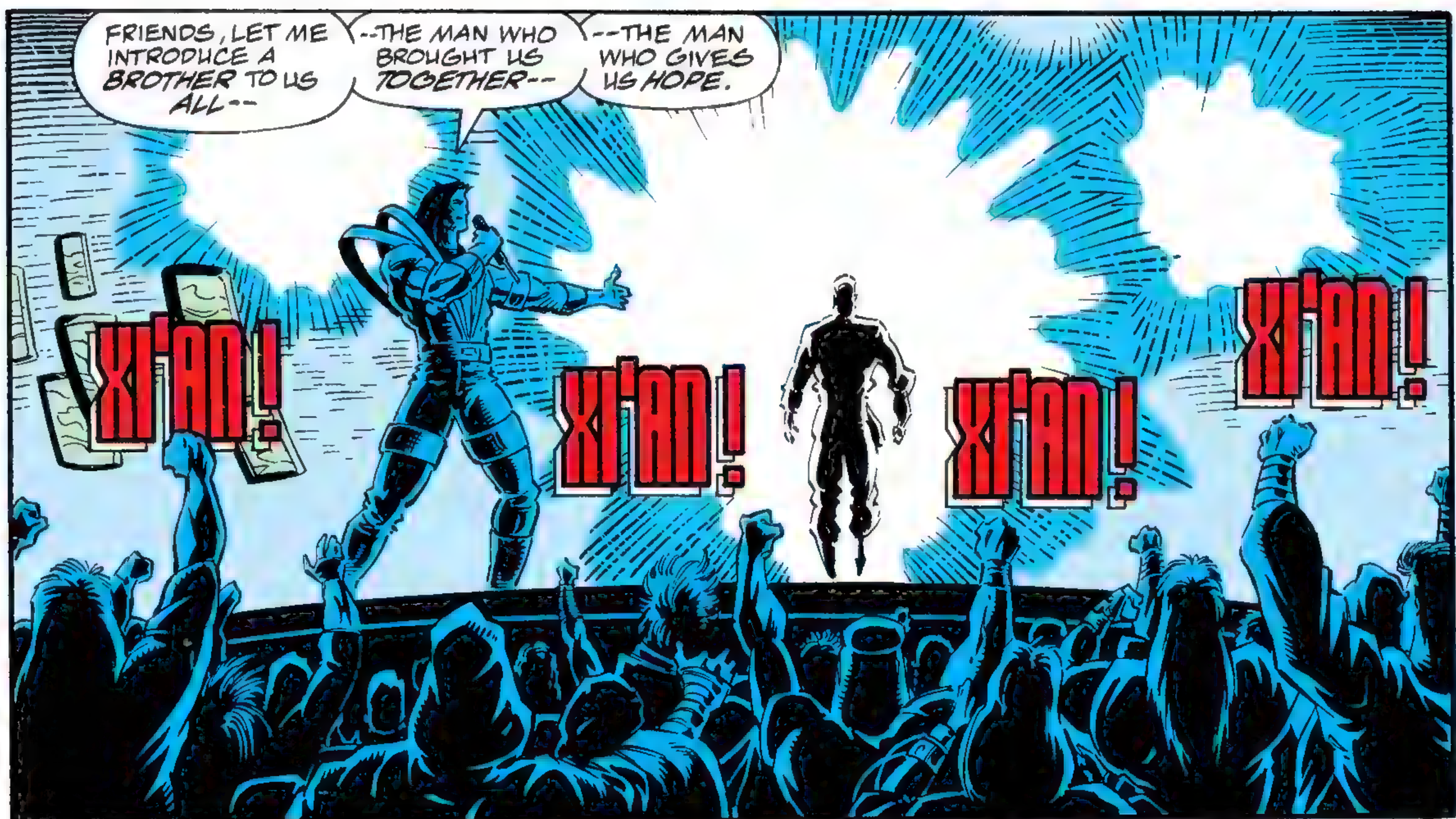
DID YOU SEE SYNGE?

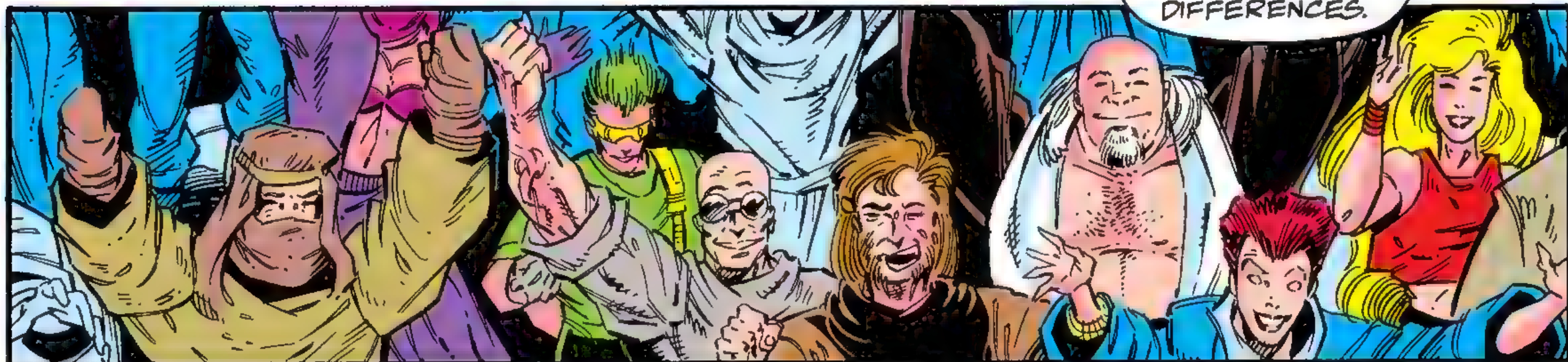
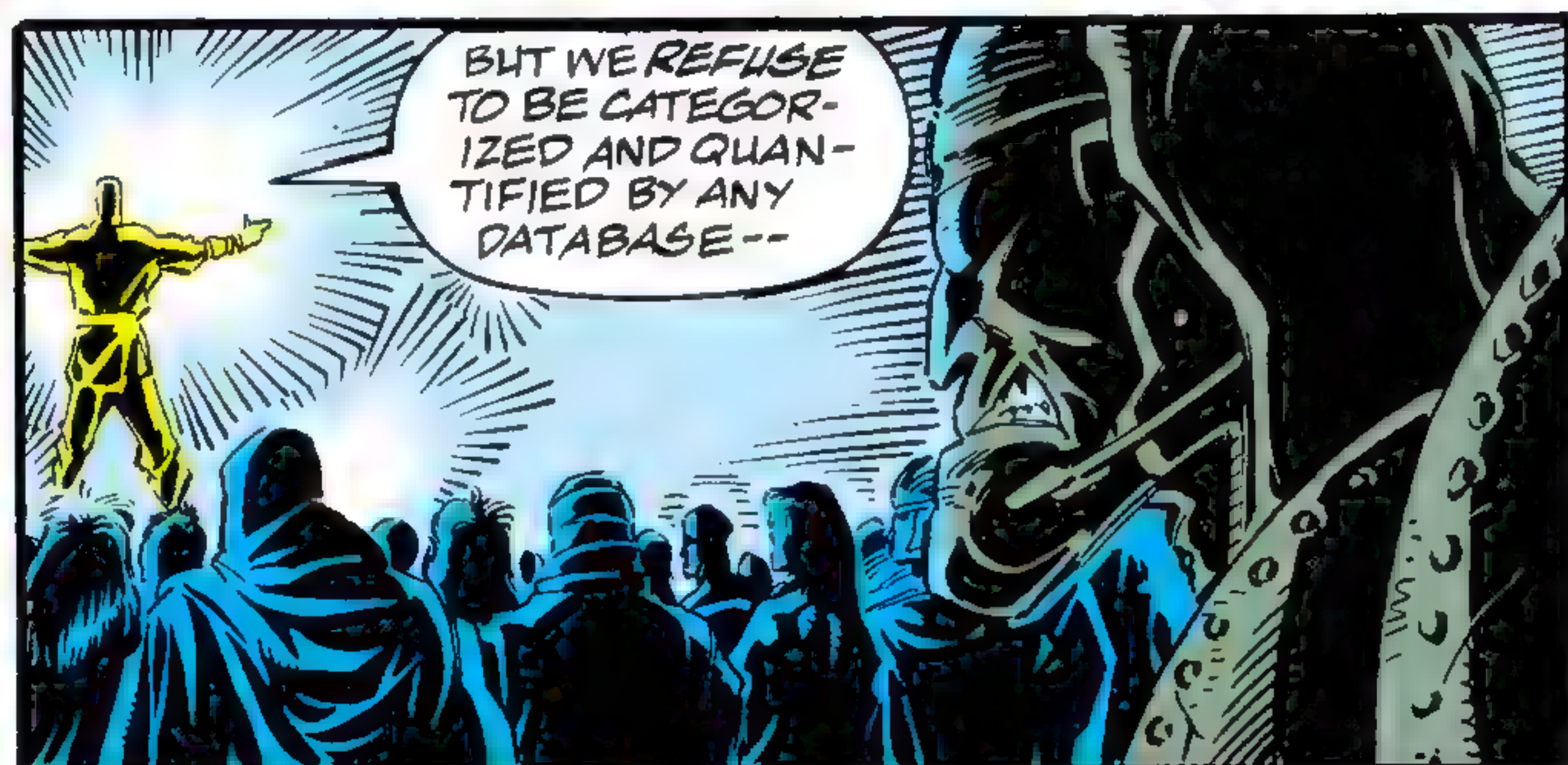
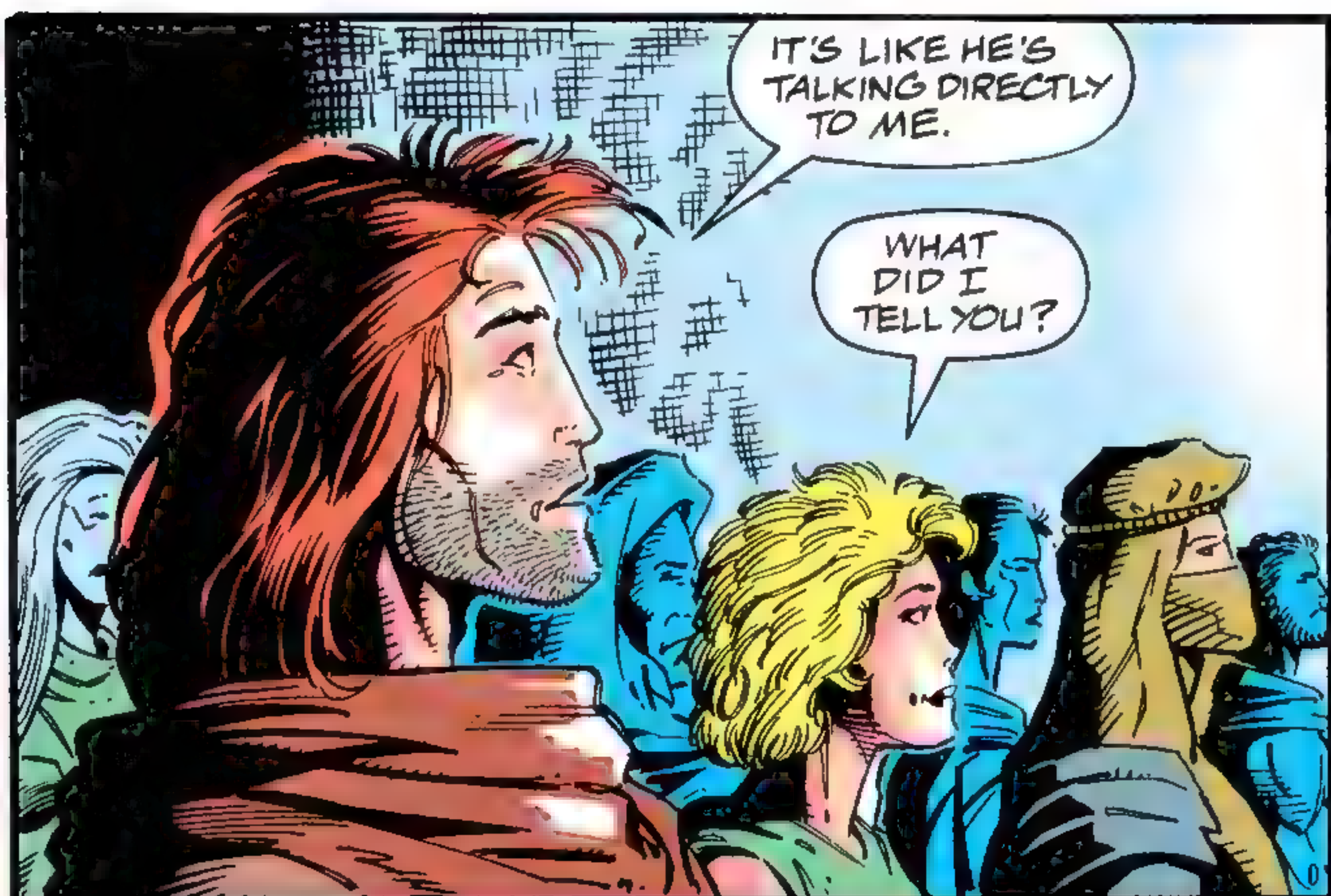


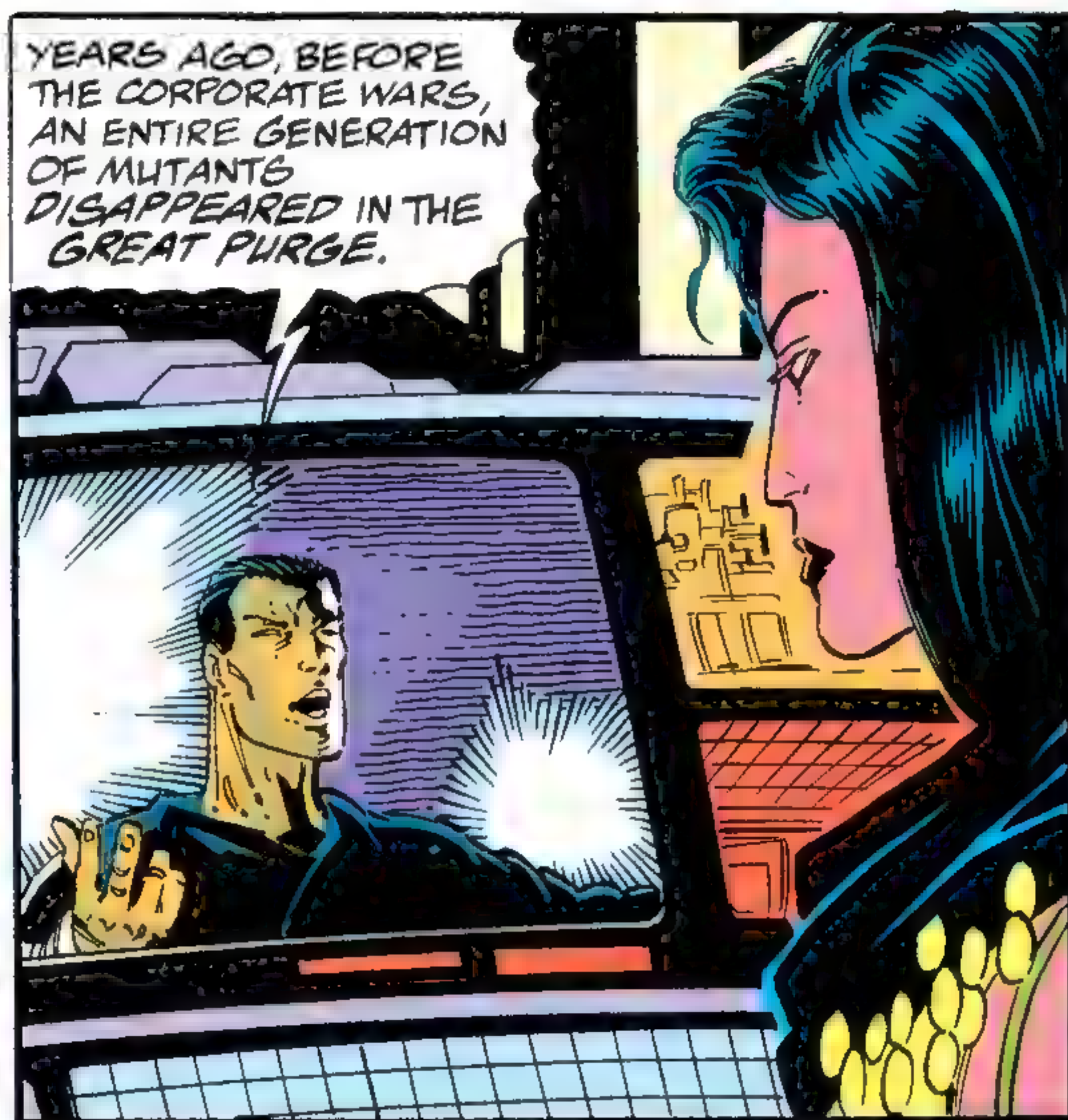
FROM THIS POINT ON, WE TRAVEL A ROUGH AND TREACHEROUS ROAD.

DON'T BE SO ELLIPTICAL. WHAT HAPPENED BETWEEN YOU TWO?

LATER, I HAVE TO ADDRESS THE GATHERING.









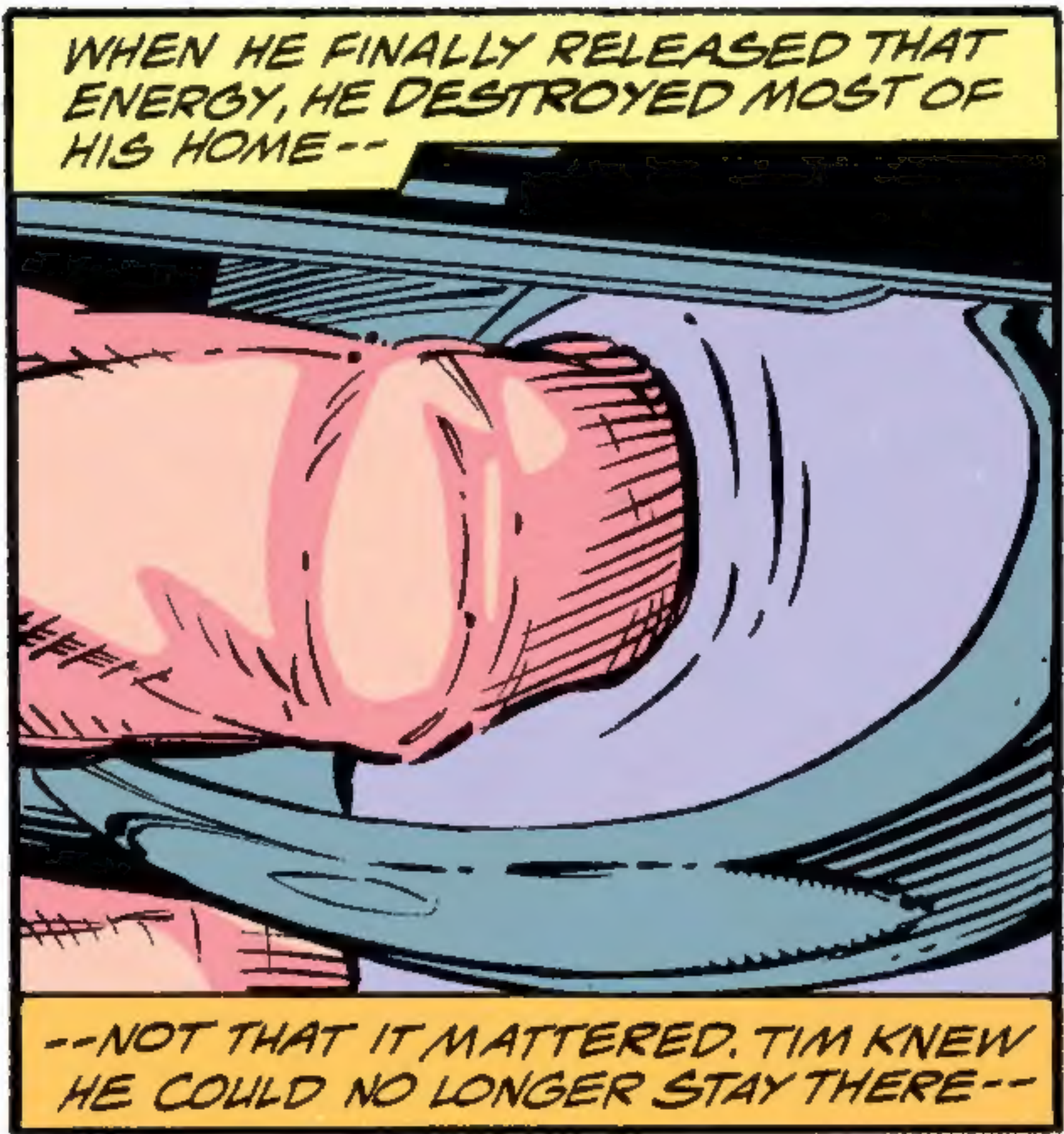
AT NINETEEN, TIM THOUGHT HE HAD A FUTURE.

THEN ONE DAY THE ELECTRICAL SYSTEMS AROUND HIM ALL BROWNED OUT--



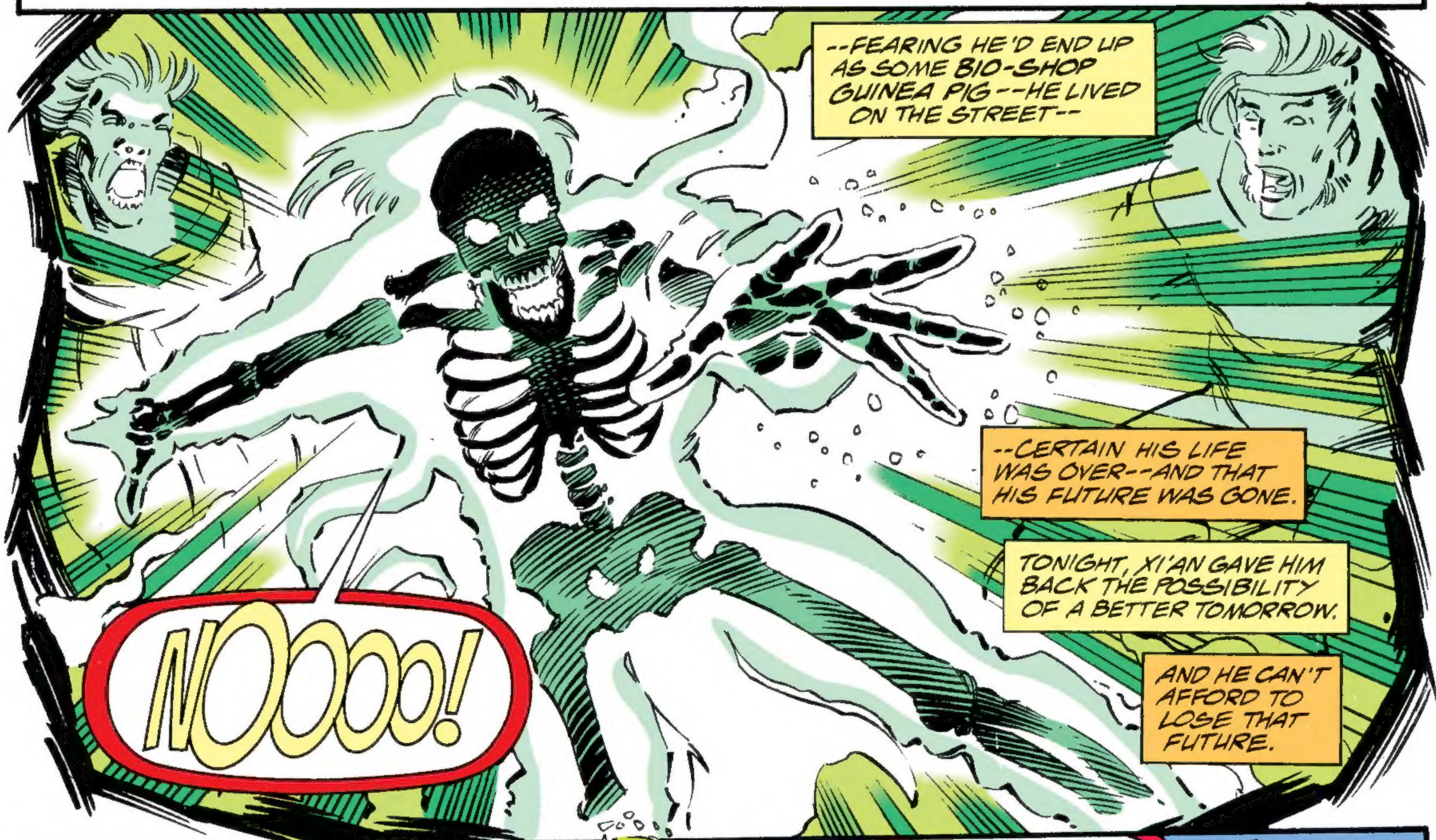
--AND HE REALIZED HE WAS DRAINING THE POWER--

--CHARGING HIS BODY LIKE A MEGA-VOLT BATTERY.



WHEN HE FINALLY RELEASED THAT ENERGY, HE DESTROYED MOST OF HIS HOME--

--NOT THAT IT MATTERED. TIM KNEW HE COULD NO LONGER STAY THERE--

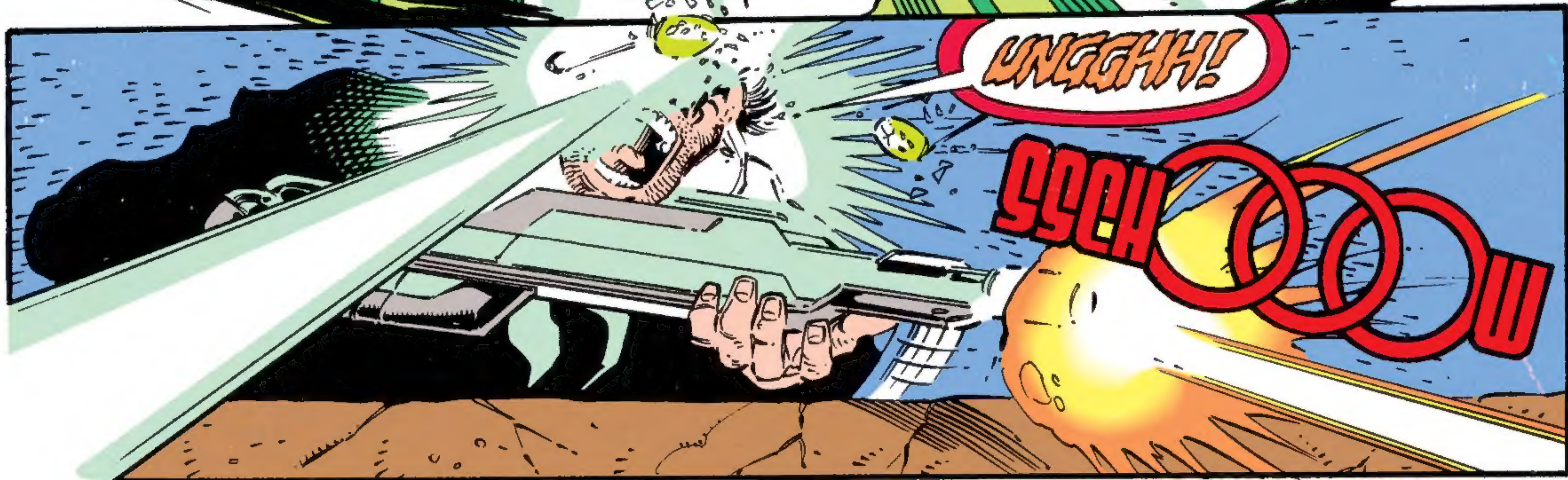


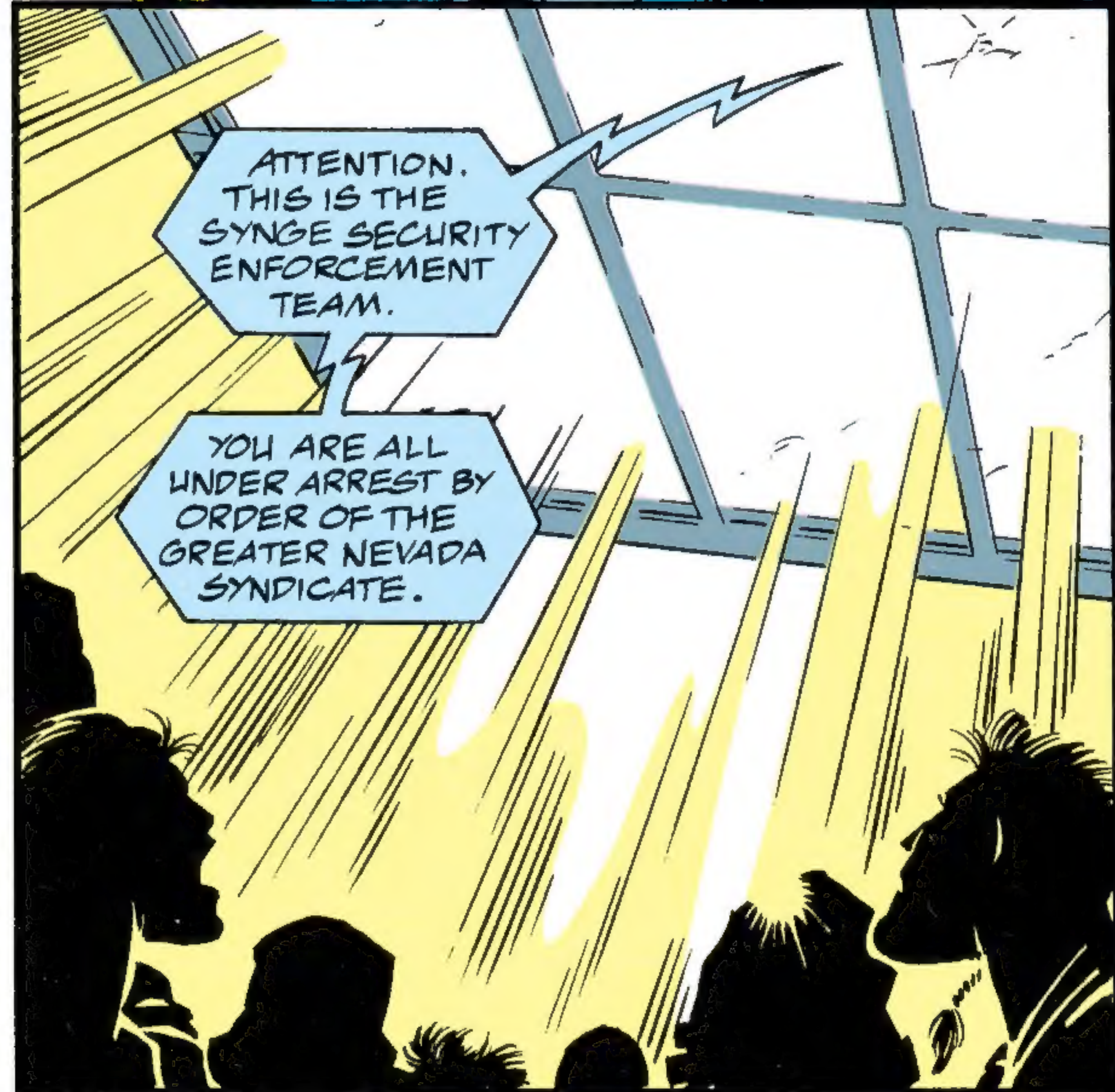
--FEARING HE'D END UP AS SOME BIO-SHOP GUINEA PIG--HE LIVED ON THE STREET--

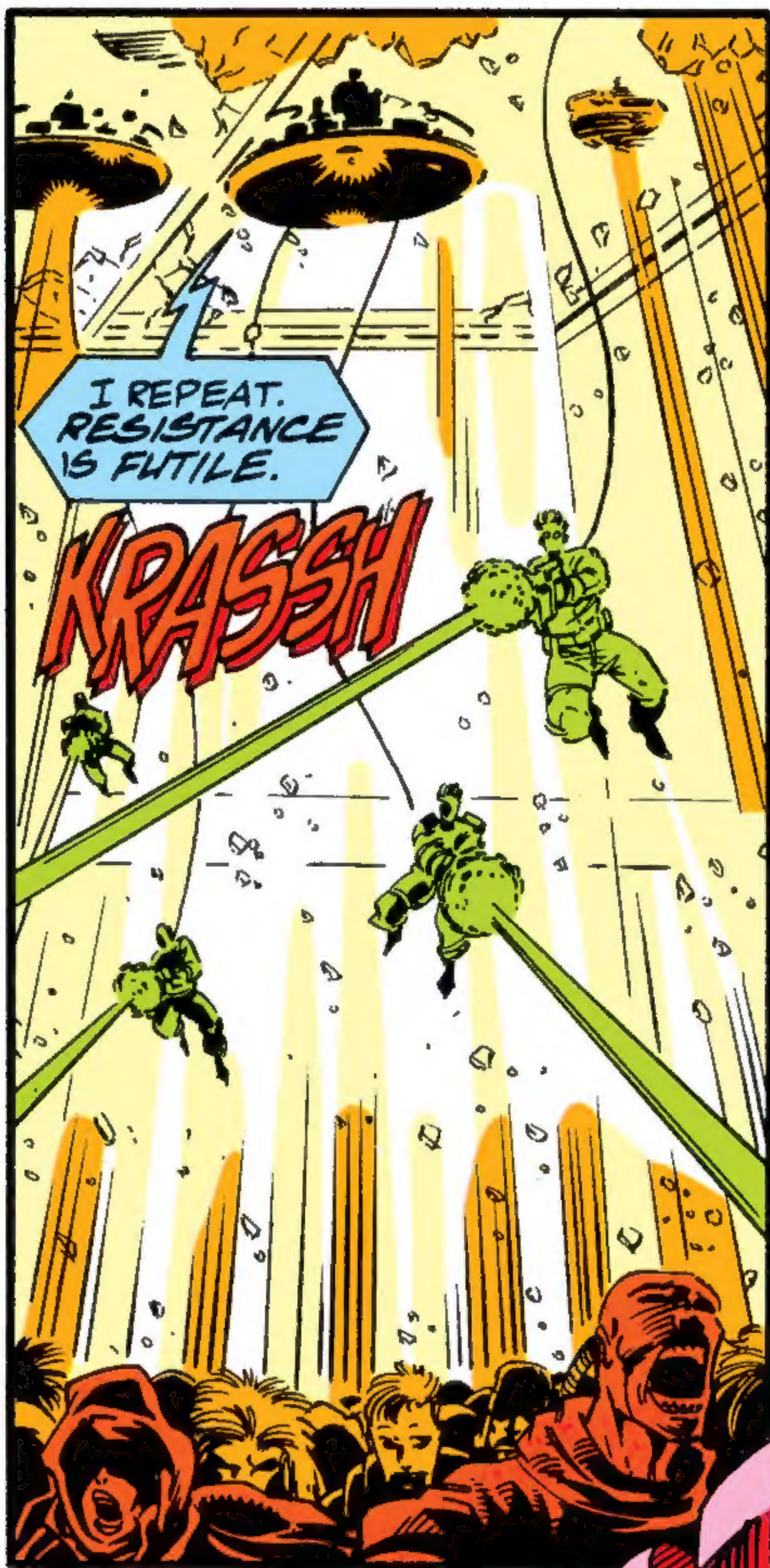
--CERTAIN HIS LIFE WAS OVER--AND THAT HIS FUTURE WAS GONE.

TONIGHT, XI'AN GAVE HIM BACK THE POSSIBILITY OF A BETTER TOMORROW.

AND HE CAN'T AFFORD TO LOSE THAT FUTURE.

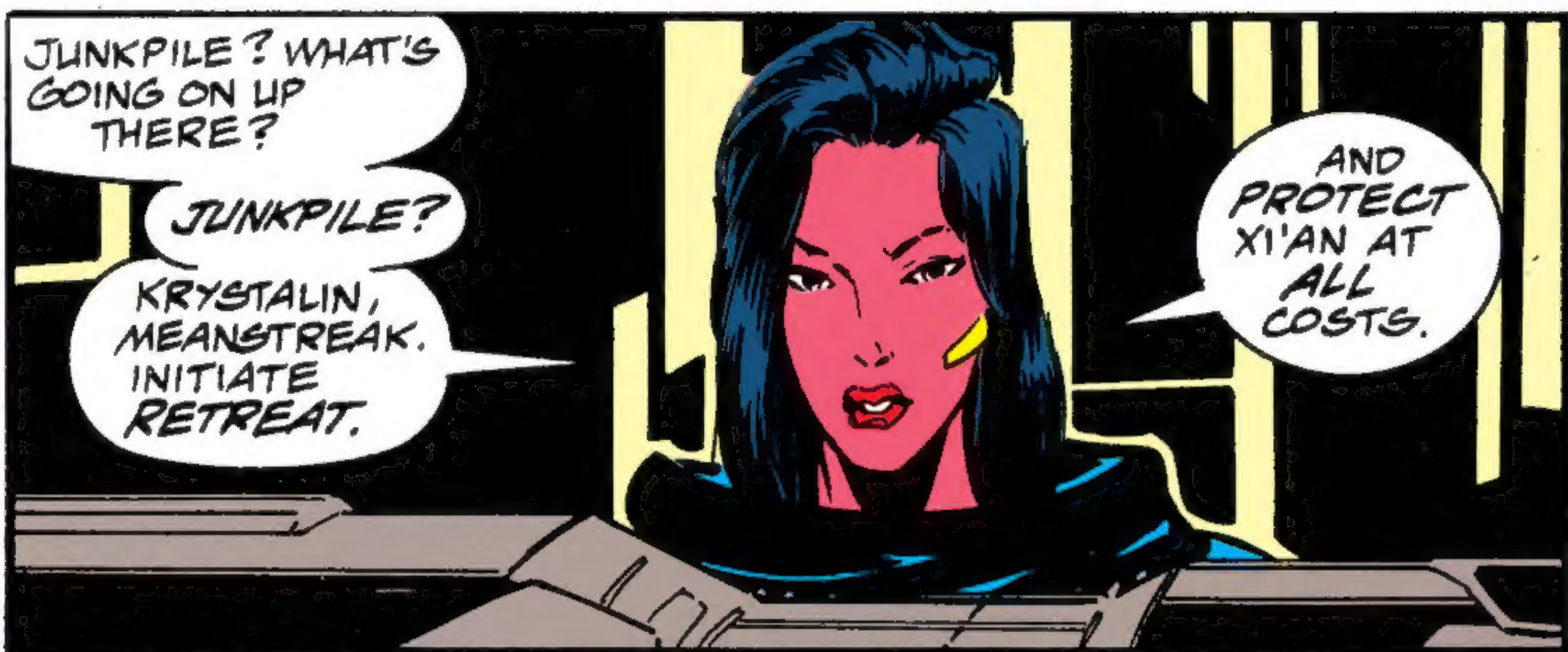






I REPEAT.  
RESISTANCE  
IS FUTILE.

**KRASSH!**

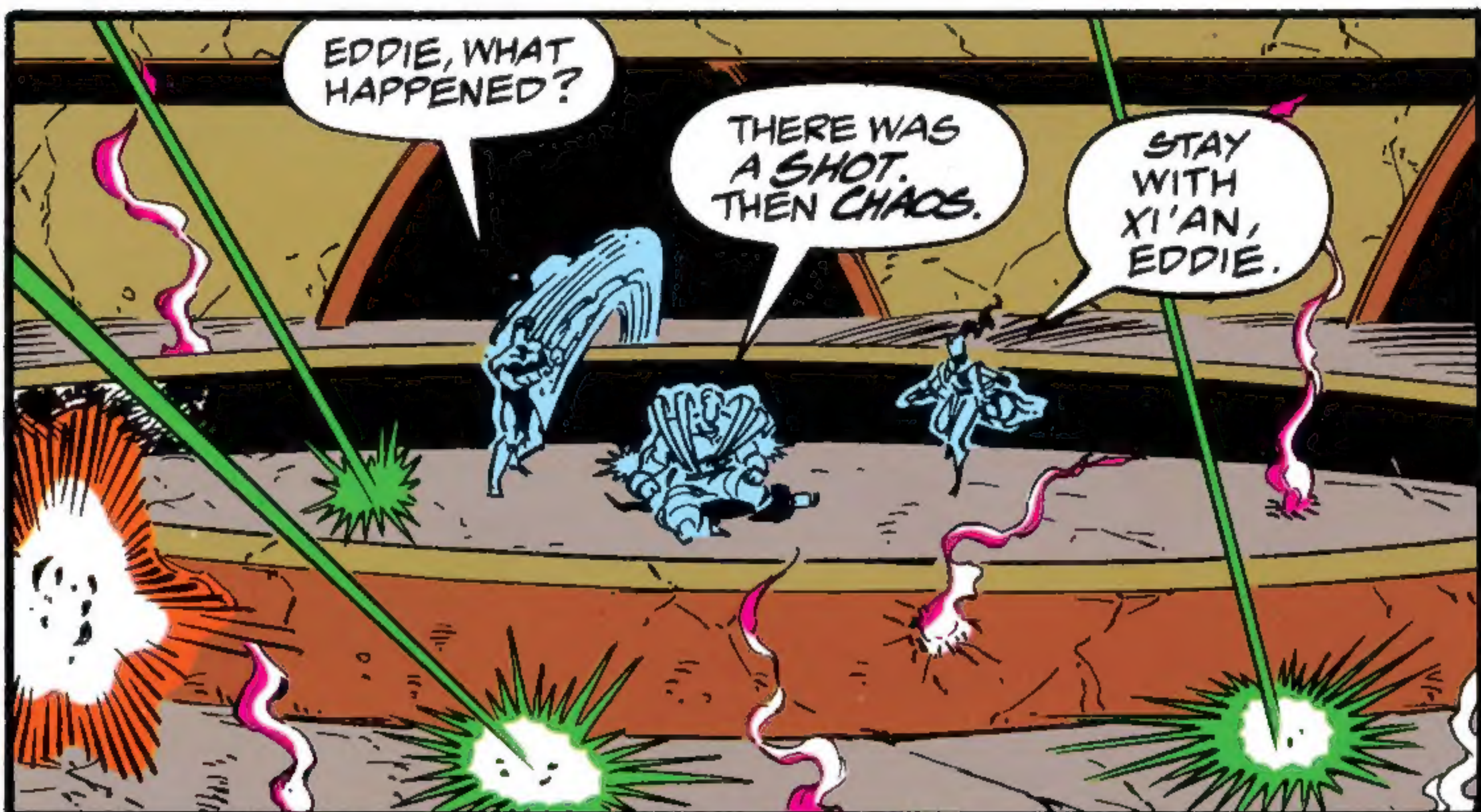


JUNKPILE? WHAT'S  
GOING ON UP  
THERE?

JUNKPILE?

KRYSTALIN,  
MEANSTREAK.  
INITIATE  
RETREAT.

AND  
PROTECT  
XI'AN AT  
ALL  
COSTS.



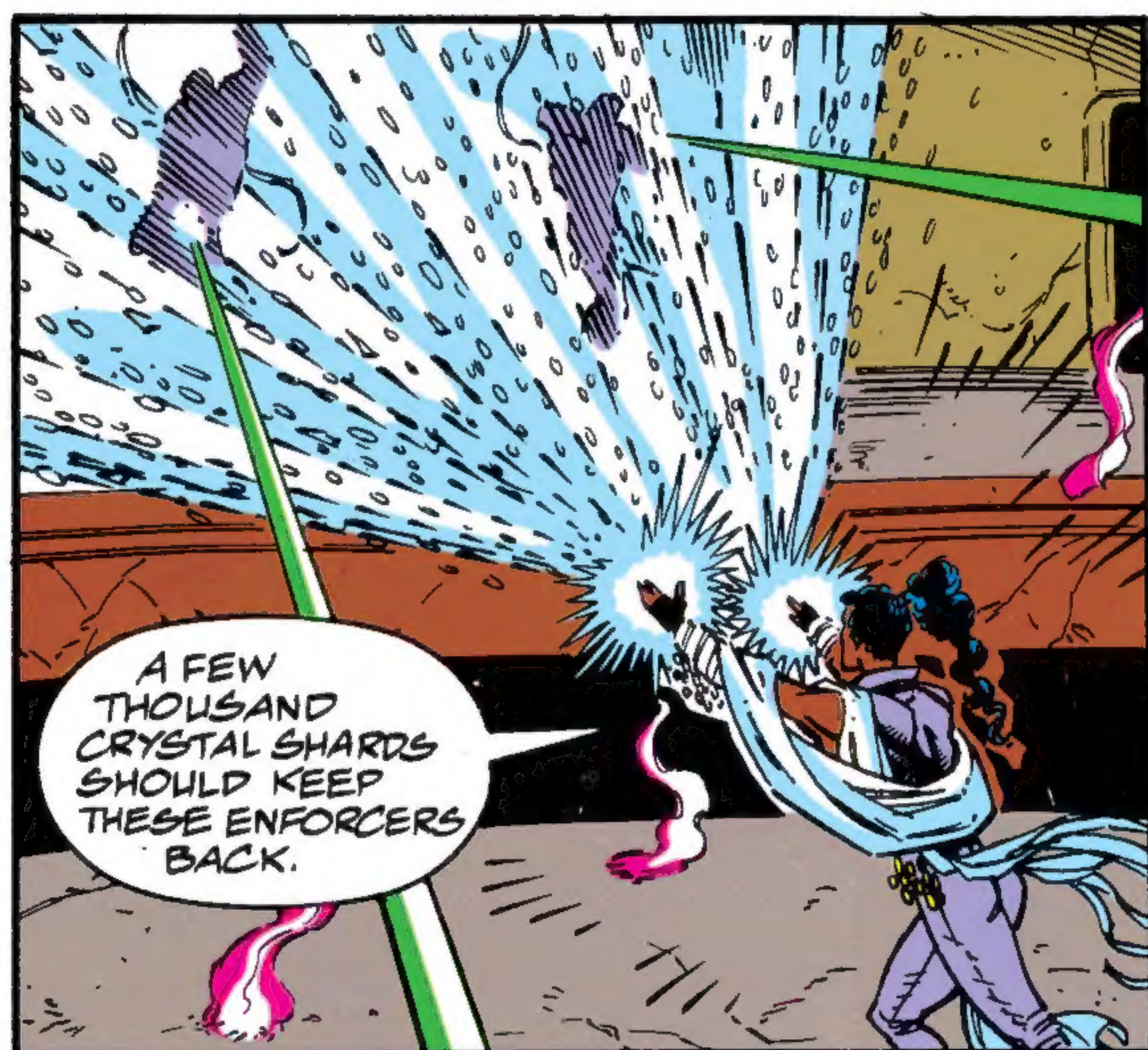
EDDIE, WHAT  
HAPPENED?

THERE WAS  
A SHOT.  
THEN CHAOS.

STAY  
WITH  
XI'AN,  
EDDIE.

YOU CAN'T HURT  
A MAN MADE OF  
ADAMANTIUM!

BUT WHEN  
YOU GET  
CLOSER I  
WILL HURT  
YOU!



A FEW  
THOUSAND  
CRYSTAL SHARDS  
SHOULD KEEP  
THESE ENFORCERS  
BACK.



TINA--  
XI'AN--  
IS HE--?

NO IDEA.  
BUT WE GOTTA  
GET OUT OF  
HERE.

GET TO  
THE STAGE.  
NOW!

